

THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES OF  
THE EDINBURGH MERCHANT ELITE, 1600-1638

James Johnston Brown

Presented for the Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy

University of Edinburgh

1985



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page No.
VOLUME I		
Abbreviations		iii
Acknowledgements		iv
Declaration		v
Abstract		vi
Chapter One	Introduction: The Burgh and its Merchant Elite, 1600-38	1
Chapter Two	The Civic Duties of the Burgh Elite	38
Chapter Three	Merchants and Merchandising	101
Chapter Four	The Business Practices of the Burgh Elite	174
Chapter Five	The Growth and Development of Money-lending	233
Chapter Six	Urban Landholding and Property Renting	272
VOLUME II		
Chapter Seven	Rural Landholding	303
Chapter Eight	Politics and Religion	355
Chapter Nine	Conclusion	410
Abbreviations to Appendices		423
Appendix I	Proportions of Imports to Leith 1621-23 Made by Elite	424
Appendix II	Imports: Numbers of Tuns Arriving at Leith, 1636-39	429
Appendix III	Proportions of Exports from Leith 1611-28 Made by Elite	432
Appendix IV	Imports: Numbers of Ships Arriving at Leith	434
Appendix V	Exports: Numbers of Ships Leaving Leith 1611-28	438
Appendix VI	Entries of Ships to Leith: Arrivals from Scottish Ports 1638-39	440
Appendix VII	Burgh Elite 1600-1638	441
Bibliography		545

## Tables and Maps:

	Page No.
Table 1    Average Tax Assessments of the Burgh, 1605-37	17
Table 2    Numbers of Elite on Town Council	40
Table 3    Members of Elite Serving as Water Bailie or Bailies of Leith	63
Table 4    Numbers of Elite Service as Constables, 1611-38	71
Table 5A   Numbers of Elite Listed and Elected as Elders and Deacons, 1625	79
Table 5B   North-East Kirk Session (Trinity Church)	79
Table 5C   Numbers of Elite Serving as Elders and Deacons, 1637	79
Table 6    Elite on Kirk Council	87
Table 7A   Elite Members Involved in St Paul's Work and Drapery Council	91
Table 7B   Elite Members Involved in Correction House	91
Table 8    Value of Rent Collected By the Elite, 1635	279
Table 9    Tax Assessments of the Burgh Populace, 1601-37	364
Map 1      Edinburgh in the Early Seventeenth Century	11
Map 2      Distribution of Rural Property Interests of Edinburgh Merchant Elite 1600-38	314

## ABBREVIATIONS

Adv. Lib.	Advocates Library Collection.
AT (1635)	Annuity Tax of the Inhabitants of Edinburgh, 1634-6.
Balfour, <u>Historical Works</u>	Balfour, Sir John, <u>Historical Works</u> , 4 vols, ed. J. Haig (Edinburgh, 1824-5).
B.O.E.C.	Book of the Old Edinburgh Club.
Calderwood, <u>History</u>	Calderwood, D., <u>History of the Kirk of Scotland</u> , 8 vols, edd. T. Thomson and D. Laing (Wodrow Society, 1842-49).
DGCR	Dean of Guild Court Records.
ECA	Edinburgh City Archives.
<u>Edin. Marriages</u>	<u>The Register of Marriages for the Parish of Edinburgh, 1595-1700</u> , ed. H. Paton (SRS, 1905).
Edin. Tests.	Commissariat Court Records.
Leslie, <u>Relation</u>	Leslie, J., Earl of Rothes, <u>A Relation of Proceedings Concerning the Affairs of the Kirk of Scotland, from August 1637 to July 1638</u> , ed. D. Laing, (Bannatyne Club, 1830).
Maidment, <u>Melros Papers</u>	<u>State Papers and Miscellaneous Correspondence of Thomas, Earl of Melros</u> , 2 vols, ed. J. Maidment, (Abbotsford Club, 1837).
Merk of the Tun	Book of the Merk of the Tun, 1636-48.
MSS, ETCR	Manuscript volumes of Edinburgh Town Council Records.
NLS	National Library of Scotland.
<u>Reports</u>	<u>Reports on the State of Certain Parishes in Scotland, 1627</u> , ed. A. Macdonald, (Maitland Club, 1835).
Shore Dues	Compt of Edward Little of Shore Dues Collected at Leith 1638-9
SR	Extent Rolls of the Inhabitants of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1601-42.
SRO	Scottish Record Office.

Other abbreviations used conform to the list of 'Abbreviated Titles' in SHR, xlii (1963). All money is in £ Scots unless otherwise stated.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with anyone writing a thesis I owe much to the help and inspiration from discussions with fellow students in the Department of Scottish History. I am grateful in particular to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Lynch, for the constant encouragement, guidance and interest which he has shown in my work during my period of study. I am similarly grateful to Dr. W.H. Makey, the Edinburgh City Archivist, Dr. E.P.D. Torrie and Dr. Thomas Riis for allowing me to discuss many aspects of Edinburgh history with them.

I wish to acknowledge the help of the staffs of the Scottish Record Office, the National Library of Scotland and the Rijksarchief in Zeeland, Middelburg, in particular Dr. R.C. Hol. I am also grateful to Mr. Ray Harris of the Geography Department of the University of Edinburgh for his work on the maps.

For financial support which helped me undertake this research I am grateful to the University of Edinburgh and to the Department of Scottish History Research Fund.

I am very grateful to Mrs Doris Williamson of the Scottish History Department for the accurate and quick work which she did in typing this manuscript as well as for the sympathetic ear and many kindnesses which she has shown over the past years.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my father, J.R. Brown, which can never be repaid. His support, both financial and moral, as well as his constant encouragement, have made this work possible.

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, and that no part of it has been previously published in the form in which it is now presented.

## ABSTRACT

The early seventeenth century has been regarded by historians generally as a period of social, political and economic change throughout Europe. Scotland between 1600 and 1638 - a time of relative economic and governmental stability from the ascension of James VI to the throne of England to the Wars of the Covenant - was not immune from these changes. Many of them were influenced by a group of 300 of the wealthiest merchants of Edinburgh. These men directed the political future of the burgh, serving on the town council at parliament and as the burgh's representatives at the Convention of Royal Burghs. In economic terms the elite effectively dominated the import and export trade of the country. They were involved in the traditional Scottish market areas of the Baltic and the Low Countries but also expanded trade into England and France. The elite developed new business practices; they invested in urban property, purchased grain futures, became involved in business partnerships, shipowning, moneylending and through it the wadsetting of rural property. They also developed small scale manufacturies and through their use of factors in foreign cities linked themselves to the mainstream European economy in an unprecedented fashion. By the late 1630s the elite experienced economic contractions. They were overburdened by constant taxation, disappointed by the failure of attempts at commercial union with England and alienated from the crown. The attitudes and reactions of the burgh's wealthiest merchants were to prove crucial in a society on the brink of social chaos and revolution.

## INTRODUCTION

THE BURGH AND ITS MERCHANT ELITE 1600-38

Scotland, in the seventeenth century, was a nation dominated economically, socially and politically by its only major urban centre as were few other early modern European countries. Viewed as it would have been for the first time from either a vessel on the Forth or from the southern land route through the Borders Edinburgh would have presented a singularly spectacular vista. Built on a steep ridge of raised land running from the high, volcanic rock of the castle in the west to the splendour of both Holyrood Abbey and the palace nestling at the foot of the Crag in the east, bounded on the north and south by lochs, the burgh walls, gates, tenements and church spires rose out of and mingled into a rural landscape. Certainly contemporary travellers recognized the city's equal beauty and squalor. Edinburgh impressed those visiting it; it was described in 1600 as '... by far the busiest commercial town in the country...', in 1618 as possessing the '... fairest and goodliest street that ever ... eyes beheld...', and in 1636 as a city '... built upon a hill ... ascending [from the castle] to give a graceful ascent to the great street, which ... is a fair, spacious, and capacious walk ... the glory and beauty of the city ... [lined by] ... houses ... built of stone (some five, some six stories high.)'<sup>1</sup> Apart from the sheer physical dominance which the burgh had, it was also the

---

1. P.H. Brown, Early Travellers in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1973), 93, 110, 139. The city was described in 1600 by Henri, Duc de Rohan, in 1618 by Taylor, and in 1636 by Sir William Brereton.



centre of commerce for the country through its port of Leith and a bustling market town with a population of well over 20,000 inhabitants. Yet, the undoubted economic sway which the burgh held over the country as a whole was firmly controlled by a group of no more than 310 of the wealthiest merchants in the nation. These men guided not only the usual and traditional commercial traffic of the burgh - the imports and exports through the burgh's port - but it was also their business acumen which led them to divert their income into such profitable financial enterprises as moneylending, commodity speculation, manufacturing, as well as urban and rural landholding. Taking advantage of the political and economic stability of the early years of the seventeenth century Edinburgh's merchant princes, also the burgh's rulers, completely dominated most of the money-making institutions of Scotland. While this dominance was to prove the strength of the nation's economy in the first three decades of the seventeenth century it was also its weakness. For, given the economic and political uncertainties of the late 1630s, it was this group which was to suffer the most, and their suffering in turn was to affect the economic stability of the country for years to come.

Any examination of a local community is limited by the source material available. Given the wide range of documents available for a study of the Edinburgh merchant society in the early years of the seventeenth century it is somewhat surprising that a detailed exploration of it has not been attempted.



Indeed, it is only recently that any such in-depth studies of Scottish burgh society have been attempted.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, various aspects of Edinburgh society at least have been explored thoroughly from a religious and political angle for the periods from 1550 to 1585 and from 1638.<sup>3</sup> However, apart from an examination of a number of the testaments of the burgh's merchants between 1570 and 1603,<sup>4</sup> studies of the economic and social factors influencing Scotland's largest town between 1600 and 1638 have been almost non-existent. A recent attempt to examine the social and economic structure of the burgh between 1600 and 1680 through an analysis mainly of the burgess and apprentice rolls is limited by both the source materials examined and the time scale chosen and is, therefore, of only general use in any attempt to understand in depth the workings of the

- 
2. E.L. Ewan, *The Burgesses of Fourteenth-Century Scotland - A Social History* (unpublished University of Edinburgh Ph.D. 1985); D. MacNiven, *Merchant and Trader in Early Seventeenth-Century Aberdeen* (unpublished University of Aberdeen M.Litt, 1977); E.P.D. Torrie, *The Gild of Dunfermline in the Fifteenth Century* (unpublished University of Edinburgh Ph.D, 1984). I am grateful to Dr. Torrie for allowing me access to her Ph.D. thesis; W. Coutts, *Social and Economic History of the Commissariat of Dumfries from 1600-1665 as disclosed by the Register of Testaments* (unpublished University of Edinburgh M.Litt, 1982).
  3. M. Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1981); W. Makey, *The Church of the Covenant: Revolution and Social Change in Scotland 1637-1651* (Edinburgh, 1979). For examinations of other burghs see T.C. Smout, 'The Glasgow merchant community in the seventeenth century', *SHR*, xlvii (1968); T.C. Smout, 'The development and enterprise of Glasgow 1556-1707', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, vii (1960), 194-212; T.M. Devine, 'The Scottish merchant community 1680-1740' in R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner (edd.), *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1982); T.M. Devine, 'The merchant class of the larger Scottish towns in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries' in G. Gordon and B. Dicks (edd.), *Scottish Urban History* (Aberdeen, 1983).
  4. M.H.B. Sanderson, 'The Edinburgh merchants in society 1570-1603 - the evidence of their testaments', in I. Cowan and D. Shaw (edd.), *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh 1983).

burgh's merchant community.<sup>5</sup> Even the more general studies of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Scottish economy have certain limitations, concentrating heavily either on the period up to 1625, or that after 1660.<sup>6</sup> The histories of the Wars of the Covenant touch upon the economic crisis of the late 1630s but in general gloss over the role played by Scottish merchants in the years leading up to the break with the crown, preferring to concentrate mainly on the response of the nobility and lairds.<sup>7</sup> Thus, a satisfactory economic and social history of the attitudes, responses and problems faced by the Scottish burghs in particular to the Wars of the Covenant, has yet to be attempted.<sup>8</sup>

The manuscript sources available for researching the history of the Edinburgh merchant community between 1600 and 1638 take many forms, ranging from tax rolls, testaments and

- 
5. J. McMillan, A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community and its Economic Activities, 1600-1660 (unpublished University of Edinburgh Ph.D., 1984). See also T.S. Colahan, The Cautious Revolutionaries: The Scottish Middle Classes in the Making of the Scottish Revolt (unpublished Columbia University Ph.D., 1962).
  6. S.G.E. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland in its European Setting, 1550-1625 (Edinburgh, 1960); S.G.E. Lythe, 'The economy of Scotland under James VI and I' (1973); T.M. Devine and S.G.E. Lythe, 'The economy of Scotland under James VI', SHR, 1 (1971); G. Donaldson, Scotland - James V to James VII (Edinburgh, 1965); R. Mitchison, Lordship to Patronage (1983).
  7. D. Stevenson, The Scottish Revolution, 1637-44 (Newton Abbot, 1973); D. Stevenson, 'The financing of the cause of the Covenants, 1638-51', SHR, 11 (1972); R.A. Bensen, South-west Fife and the Scottish Revolution: the Presbytery of Dunfermline, 1633-52 (unpublished University of Edinburgh M. Litt., 1978).
  8. The attitudes of the English boroughs to the civil war have, to some extent, been explored. See P. Clark and P. Slack, Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700 (1972); R. Howell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution (Oxford, 1967); J.T. Evans, Seventeenth-Century Norwich: Politics, Religion and Government 1620-1690 (1979); R. Howell, 'Neutralism, conservatism and political alignment in the English Revolution: the case of towns 1642-9' in J. Morrill ed., Reactions to the English Civil Wars (1982); V. Pearl, London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution, City Government and National Politics, 1625-43 (Oxford, 1961).

customs records to burgh court records and private business papers, which survive in profusion. Taken together these documents shed light upon not only the day-to-day workings of Scotland's most successful business community, but also reveal them as relatively sophisticated and influential creators of wealth within Scotland. As with many examinations of the social and economic structures of towns tax rolls play an invaluable part. Edinburgh is fortunate in having a run of tax rolls for the early years of the seventeenth century, which rival those of any other Scottish burgh.<sup>9</sup> In addition to which there survives a unique door to door list of landlords and tenants drawn up in 1635 to assess the burgh in order to raise money to pay the stipends of the town's ministers.<sup>10</sup> These two sources allow an unparalleled glimpse into the social structure of the burgh, the hierarchy within it, and the tax rolls were used as the means of determining the elite. A more personal view of the burgh's wealthiest members is given by examining their surviving testaments.<sup>11</sup> The testaments of the elite, or of their spouses, were investigated for the years between 1605 and 1650, and provided information not only of their wealth at the time of death, but also gave an indication of patterns of trade, stock held, investment in land, money-lending and manufacturing. A cautionary note regarding the use of testaments must be sounded. The amount of money left

---

9. ECA, SR.

10. ECA, AT (1635).

11. SRO, Edin. Tests.



in them is certainly no indication of wealth and cannot be used to determine status.<sup>12</sup> It was perfectly possible for a merchant to pay tax within the burgh in the top bracket yet to have most of his capital tied up in business interests and appear either poorly off or bankrupt. Alternatively, a merchant may have retired by the time of death and be living off money invested in either annuities or property and have, therefore, only a minimal amount of money. However, it is possible to chart the wealth of many of the burgh's wealthiest men through an examination of their wife's testaments, for it was normal to register the inventory and debts owed to both husband and wife not merely those of the deceased's wife. However, testaments are, by their nature, in the long run, unreliable. Only debts owed or owing at the time of death are registered, and it is not possible to determine the exact truth as to the recorded inventory of goods in hand.

The elite's role in trade is amplified by the surviving Leith customs records in the Scottish Record Office.<sup>13</sup> Limited as they are to a few years in the 1610s and 1620s, they are added to by the Book of the Merk of the Tun, 1636-48, in Edinburgh City Archives.<sup>14</sup> All these customs records, however, list only ships arriving from, or bound to, foreign ports. The discovery of the compt book of Edward Little of shore dues collected in Leith, 1638-9, not only confirms the accuracy of the Merk of the Tun

---

12. McMillan recognized the deficiencies in testaments, yet still used them in an attempt to determine status by comparing them with town council lists. See McMillan, *A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 103-9, 115-22, 150, 290-6.

13. SRO, Leith Customs Books E71/29/5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, E71/30/30.

14. ECA, Merk of the Tun.

records but also provides the only available list of ships arriving at Leith from Scottish ports for any year in the first four decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> These sources all reveal the role played <sup>by the elite</sup> in Edinburgh's trade, something which the Exchequer records do not. Indeed, the customs lists within the exchequer rolls are valuable for only a few years during the first forty years of the seventeenth century and were, normally, set in tack, giving only a nominal sum of either imports to or exports from the burgh.<sup>16</sup> Even the most complete exchequer rolls give only a list of total imports or exports for the burgh without listing the merchants involved and are of no use in an examination of the elite's role in trade.

The various court records which survive for the burgh emphasize the role played by the elite not only in trade but also within the burgh. The pertinent records of the Dean of Guild Court, which are extant run from 1566 to 1607, and 1613 to 1646.<sup>17</sup> The disputes brought before the court range from trading disputes over spoiled merchandise or failure to provide services to neighbourhood disputes involving property within the burgh. The registration of sale of land within the burgh, as well as registration of contractual agreements between the burgh's inhabitants are recorded in the Burgh Register of Deeds in the

---

15. ECA, Shore Dues.

16. SRO, E38/537-619.

17. ECA, DGCR.



Scottish Record Office.<sup>18</sup> As these records list mainly disputes over failure to redeem debts at the appropriate time or the sale of tenements an examination of the full run would be of limited value. Therefore, only the years on either side of the tax years chosen were examined; these being 1604-6, 1613-15, 1629-31 and 1636-8. Much the same sort of information is provided in the manuscript volumes of Acts and Decrees, which record cases brought before the Court of Session, the central court for civil justice. As these records run to over 300 volumes for the period up to 1640 and are not indexed, only thirteen volumes for the period between 1612 and 1614 were examined.<sup>19</sup> Even this was of limited use for the cases were again mainly actions brought for debt, or failure to provide services, and are dealt with more comprehensively in the Dean of Guild Court Records. However, these sources reveal not only the extent to which credit was made available to merchants, but also provide a view of the property market within the burgh.

The major sources for an examination of the speculation made in both urban and rural property by the elite are the Registers of Sasine in the Scottish Record Office, and the volumes of the Great Seal. Two series of sasine registers survive, one for Edinburgh in particular for 1599-1609 and 1617-1660, and a general register for the country as a whole from 1617 to 1720.<sup>20</sup> When these

---

18. SRO, Burgh Register of Deeds, vols. iv, xiv-xvi, xxvi-xxx. Hereafter B22/8/9-30.

19. SRO, CS7/275-87.

20. SRO, Register of Sasines, RS 24/1-12; RS 25/1-27 for Edinburgh. RS 1/1-15, 17-22, 24-30, 32-34, 36-47 for general register.

registrations are combined with the entries in the Registers of the Great Seal,<sup>21</sup> it is possible to build up a comprehensive pattern of property investment made by the elite, not only within the burgh but in rural areas. They certainly indicate the extent to which the elite of the Edinburgh merchants invested in and dominated the land market within Scotland during these years.<sup>22</sup>

There is, however, no single source which can rival the private business papers of the burgh's merchants which survive in the Scottish Record Office and the National Library of Scotland. The papers confirm landholding, as well as reveal their interests in moneylending, industry, and even in the more mundane aspects of merchant life such as the selling of cloth and wine to important local families. Certain limitations are attached to these papers. Due simply either to the chance survival of one family's muniments or to particular sets of documents it is possible that over-importance may be placed on the elite's interests in one area of the country. Certainly the papers of the families of Dundas of that Ilk, as well as the earl of Morton are well represented. Nevertheless, whatever the deficiencies of these sources, when combined with the printed material in the Acts of Parliament,<sup>23</sup> the Registers of the Privy Council,<sup>24</sup> the manuscript and printed minutes of the Edinburgh

---

21. RMS, vols. vi-ix.

22. McMillan, A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community, 122-3, states that there is an absence of information about the role of Edinburgh's burgesses in property and landholding and that 'no new information has been gleaned from any primary sources studied...'. It is arguable that such a study would have benefited from research into at least the RMS volumes.

23. APS, vols. iv-v.

24. RPC, vi-xiv; (second series), i-viii.

town council,<sup>25</sup> the Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs,<sup>26</sup> and the surviving church records,<sup>27</sup> a picture not only of Edinburgh society in general in the early years of the seventeenth century can be drawn but also of the important role played within that society by the burgh's wealthiest merchants.

Edinburgh in the seventeenth century was a city divided into four quarters for administrative purposes, each quarter equivalent from 1598 to a parish. The quarters were further divided into thirds running in a clockwise fashion from the north-west to the south-west. For the purposes of taxation, however, Edinburgh was slightly larger than just the four quarters inside the town walls. The third part of the north-east quarter also included both sides of the Leith Wynd and a wedge-shape on the south side of the Canongate running from Cowgate Port to St. John's Cross, the reason behind this being obscure. Within these boundaries, encompassing a segment of land probably no larger than 3,500 ft. by 2,000 ft., lived approximately 20,000 to 25,000 inhabitants. It has been estimated that the population of the burgh proper in the late 1550s ranged from 9,000 to 15,000 inhabitants and was probably no more than 15,000 by the 1590s.<sup>28</sup> The tax roll of 1583 lists a total of 1,245 taxable inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> There had been a significant widening of the burgh tax net in the 1550s by the

---

25. Edin. Recs., iv, 1573-89; 1589-1641 (3 vols.)

26. RCRB, vols. i-iii.

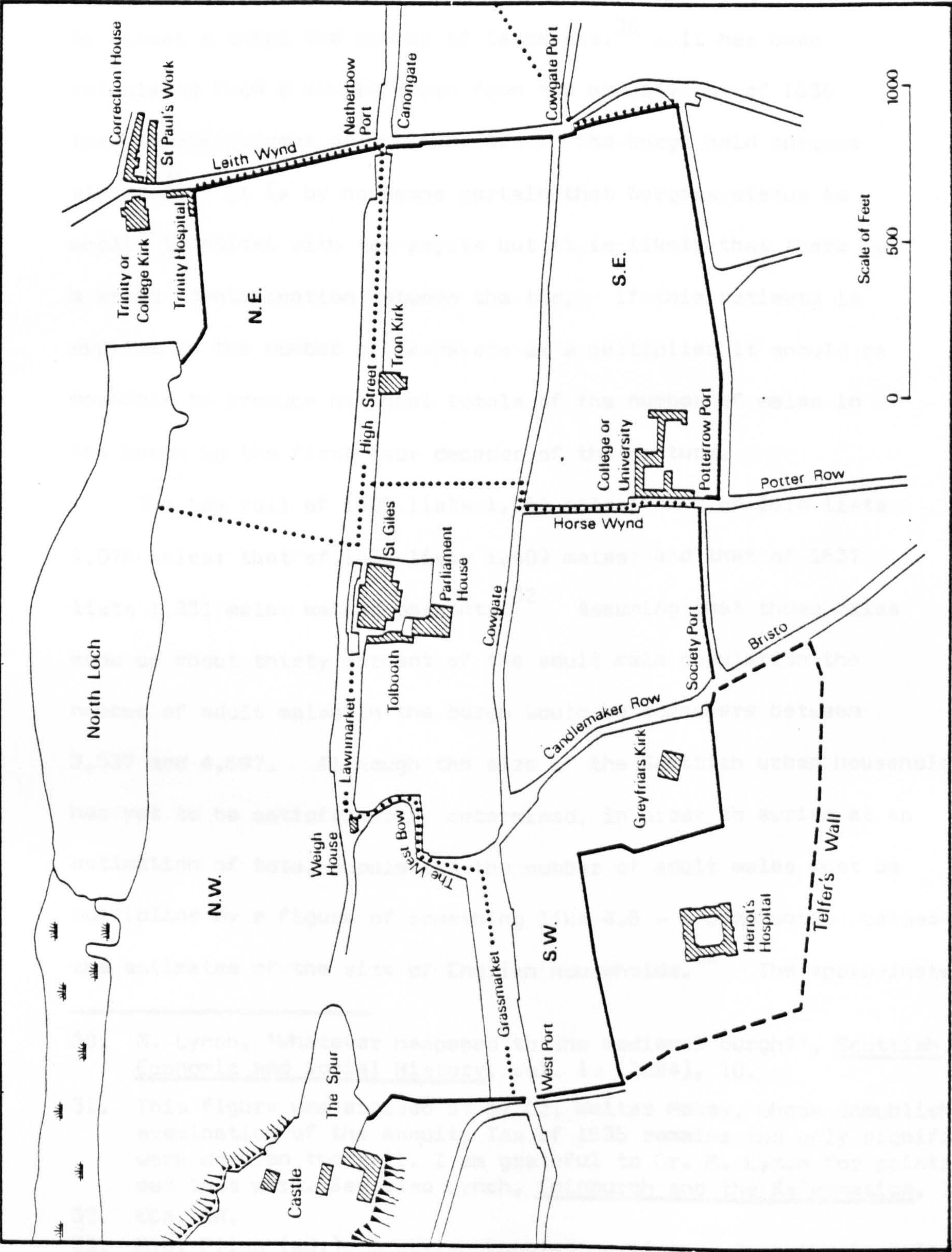
27. ECA, Kirk Council Minutes, vol. i, 1608-22; vol. ii, 1625-57; SRO, CH2/141/1.

28. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 9-11.

29. Ibid., 11.



MAP I



Edinburgh in the early 17th century



inclusion within the taxable population of sons of merchants before they had gained actual burgess status. This scheme was abandoned for a time but reintroduced in 1584, increasing by almost a third the number of taxpayers.<sup>30</sup> It has been calculated from a sample drawn from the annuity tax of 1635 that thirty-percent of householders in the burgh held burgess status.<sup>31</sup> It is by no means certain that burgess status is wholly identical with tax payers but it is likely that there is a broad identification between the two. If this estimate is applied to the number of taxpayers as a multiplier it should be possible to produce notional totals of the number of males in the burgh in the first four decades of the century.

The tax roll of 1605 lists 1,061 males; that of 1614 lists 1,076 males; that of 1630 lists 1,409 males; and that of 1637 lists 1,331 males making payments.<sup>32</sup> Assuming that these males made up about thirty percent of the adult male population the number of adult males in the burgh would be somewhere between 3,537 and 4,697. Although the size of the Scottish urban household has yet to be satisfactorily determined, in order to arrive at an estimation of total population the number of adult males must be multiplied by a figure of something like 4.5 - a compromise between the estimates of the size of English households.<sup>33</sup> The approximate

---

30. M. Lynch, 'Whatever happened to the medieval burgh?', Scottish Economic and Social History, vol. iv (1984), 10.

31. This figure was arrived at by Dr. Walter Makey, whose unpublished examination of the Annuity Tax of 1635 remains the only significant work done on the roll. I am grateful to Dr. M. Lynch for pointing out this work. See also Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 10.

32. ECA, SR.

33. M.W. Flinn (ed.), Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s (Cambridge, 1977), 200; Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 23, n.6; McMillan, A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community, 33-5. English household size has been estimated at between 4.75 and 4.2. See T.P.R. Laslett, 'Size and structure of the household in England over three centuries', Population Studies, no. 2 (1969), 207, 211; D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley add. Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography (1965), 177.



size of the burgh's population in 1605 would have been 15,947; in 1614 16,172; in 1630 21,177 and in 1637 20,005. Certain qualifications apply to these estimations based on tax rolls. They do not include nobles, who amounted to about four percent of the population in 1635,<sup>34</sup> or lawyers, and is limited to the area of the town taxed as belonging to the burgh.

Nevertheless, these figures correspond broadly to other estimates of the population. Using the annuity tax of 1635 it has been determined that within the burgh there were 3,901 residential households.<sup>35</sup> This would give a population of 17,555, to which a further four percent must be added for nobles residing within the burgh, making an estimated population of the four quarters in 1635 of at least 18,257. Although there are no figures for the number of adult communicants in the burgh between 1600 and 1638 a kirk session census of 1592 of the four quarters listed 8,000 adult communicants, which if multiplied by the accepted figure of 1.7 gives a population of the burgh of 13,600. This figure is somewhat low, but comes only seven years after an outbreak of plague which accounted for 1,400 lives in Edinburgh according to contemporary references.<sup>36</sup>

These estimates deal only with the four quarters and there are few firm estimates of the population of greater Edinburgh. This

---

34. ECA, AT (1635). Figure supplied by Dr. Walter Makey.

35. Ibid. Dr. Makey also calculated the existence of 903 businesses. It is by no means certain that the distinction between residential and business premises was all that firm. It was possible for business property to have occupants. See below, p. 300.

36. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 10-11, 23 n.15-7.

would include the Canongate, north and south Leith, and the suburbs at the West Port, Potter Row, Pleasance and St. Leonards. According to a tax roll of the Canongate in 1630, a population of at least 1,545 lived within its boundaries.<sup>37</sup> The number of adult communicants in the Canongate in 1567 was given as 1,250, giving a population of over 2,000.<sup>38</sup> It has been estimated that in 1644 2,736 inhabitants of Leith died in the plague, this being more than half the inhabitants.<sup>39</sup> Certainly the Stent Book of North and South Leith of 1647 lists a total of 813 males as paying tax in Leith, although this does include nobles, and Edinburgh residents.<sup>40</sup> However, the list of skippers only of South Leith in 1643 does number 167 skippers and eleven boatmen, indicating that the port must have been a bustling place even in a time of political unrest.<sup>41</sup> These figures represent the bare minimum of population, and it would not have been improbable that the population of greater Edinburgh was well in excess of 30,000, putting the burgh second in population size in Great Britain only to London.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the size of the burgh, the tax rolls are

---

37. M. Wood ed., Book of Records of the Ancient Privileges of the Canongate, (SRS, 1955), 22-5 lists 102 males paying tax. This tax roll did include five members of the burgh elite who would have lived in Edinburgh proper. A higher proportion of nobles resided within the Canongate than in Edinburgh and therefore more than four percent would have to be added to the total of 1,545.

38. A.B. Calderwood ed., The Buik of the Canaigait, 1564-1567, (SRS, 1961), 71.

39. Flinn, Scottish Population History, 138. This gives an estimated population of Leith of 4,000.

40. ECA, Stent Book of North and South Leith, 1647. This taxed Sir William Dick, Sir William Gray, as well as residents in the Canongate, Glasgow, and St. Andrews. It is probably not possible to accurately calculate a population of Leith from it - but it would appear to be well in excess of 3,000.

41. SRO, GD 226/18/16/3.

42. Norwich, the second most populous city in England, had 25,000 inhabitants in 1625. J.F. Pound, Government and Society in Tudor and Stuart Norwich, 1525-1675 (unpublished University of Leicester Ph.D, 1975), 1-4.



far more important in establishing the social status of the burgh elite than in producing a somewhat tenuous basis of population.

The economic importance of Edinburgh's taxable population in the early seventeenth century is borne out by both the regularity and the amount with which they were taxed by the crown, the Convention of Royal Burghs and its own magistrates. Between 1601 and 1637 Edinburgh's tax payers were assessed by the burgh stent masters, for various purposes, thirty-five times.<sup>43</sup> The tax rolls, drawn up for each of the town's quarters, assessed the inhabitants based upon their ability to pay in accordance to their wealth. It has been stated that the basic qualification for paying tax was owning 2,000 marks in moveable property or paying £100 in rent, but the rolls between 1605 and 1637 do not mention any basis for the determination of payments.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the reasons behind the assessments it may be assumed that the rolls were a fair reflection of the wealth of the burgh inhabitants for no objections by those taxed have been discovered. For the purposes of determining the wealthiest merchants of the burgh between 1600 and 1638 four tax rolls were examined, those of 1605, 1614, 1630 and 1637. These rolls not only reveal the relative economic structure of the burgh's inhabitants during these years, but also indicate the widening scope of those chosen to pay tax. The town council cast the tax net over a growing number of people during the first four decades of the century

---

43. ECA, SR. For the various reasons behind the taxations, see below, pp. 16, 362-4.

44. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 11.

in order to pay the assessments, and by 1638 the burgh was making claims upon individuals, such as lawyers and lairds, who had never before been included in the taxes. They also reveal that the areas within the burgh traditionally the wealthiest remained so.

The tax of 1605 was drawn up to raise £11,000 as the first payment of a tax of £38,000. A total of £11,341 5s. was assessed from 1,152 individuals, with the average payment being £9 16s. 10d. The tax of 1614 assessed 1,126 individuals for £4,474 2s. 8d. as the second payment of a crown and Convention of Royal Burghs taxation, the average payment being £3 19s. 6d. The tax of 1630 was drawn up to collect £17,333 6s. 8d. as part payment of a tax granted to the king by the Convention of Royal Burghs in July 1629. The stent masters assessed 1,653 of the burgh inhabitants to pay a total of £17,437 6s. 8d, with the average payment being £10 10s. 10d. The tax of 1637 was assessed to collect £26,666 13s. 4d. as the fourth years payment of a six year tax. A total of £27,396 7s. 4d. was charged to 1,584 tax payers with the average being £17 4s. 10d.<sup>45</sup>

Certain differences are evident between each of the taxes. The 1605 roll was divided into quarters although not into sub-thirds, despite these having been created in the 1590s. The other three taxes did divide the quarters into thirds. It is obvious from each of the four taxes that the wealthiest areas of the burgh were the north-west quarter and the first two thirds of the north-east quarter, the commercial area of the burgh and the

---

45. See table 1.

TABLE I. AVERAGE TAX ASSESSMENTS OF THE BURGH 1605-37

1605				1614				1630				1637			
	number of pay- ments	average payment	total payment	number of pay- ments	average payment	total payment	number of pay- ments	average payment	total payment	number of pay- ments	average payment	total payment	number of pay- ments	average payment	total payment
TOWN	1,152	£ 9 16s 10d	£11,341 5s	1,126	£3 19s 6d	£4,474 2s.8d	1,653	£10 10s 10d	£17,437 6s 8d	1,584	£17 4s 10d	£27,396 7s 4d			
NW quarter	314	£13 10s 10d	£ 4,252 10s	312	£5 1s 3d	£1,585 12s 8d	457	£14 7s 4d	£ 6,566 3s 4d	477	£24 10s	£11,686 13s 4d			
NW1	-	-	-	124	£4 1s	£502 7s	175	£13 6s 4d	£ 2,330 13s 4d	184	£21 12s 10d	£ 3,977 10s			
NW2	-	-	-	99	£4 1s	£499 8s	148	£11 12s 8d	£ 1,723 16s 8d	136	£20 6s 10d	£ 2,767 3s 4d			
NW3	-	-	-	89	£7 2s 2d	£633 17s 8d	134	£18 14s 10d	£2,511 13s 4d	157	£31 9s 10d	£ 4,942			
NE quarter	246	£11 7s 10d	£2,803 15s	236	£4 5s 10d	£1,013 2s 4d	399	£ 7 6s	£2,915 16s 8d	359	£13 13s 8d	£4,913 3s 4d			
NE1	-	-	-	81	£6 5s	£487	149	£ 7 0s 10d	£1,047	128	£15 17s 10d	£2,032 6s 8d			
NE2	-	-	-	61	£3 8s	£207 9s 4d	91	£ 7 14s 10d	£ 704 13s 4d	89	£11 7s 10d	£1,012 3s 4d			
NE3	-	-	-	94	£3 7s 8d	£318 13s	159	£ 7 6s 10d	£1,164 3s 4d	142	£13 3s 10d	£1,868 13s 4d			
SE quarter	238	£ 7 7s 10d	£1,758 15s	232	£3 7s 10d	£783 4s 8d	341	£10 15s 10d	£3,671 13s 4d	324	£16 4s 8d	£5,262 14s			
SE1	-	-	-	100	£2 17s 5d	£287 8s	118	£ 7 18s 10d	£938	106	£12 14s 8d	£1,348 7s 4d			
SE2	-	-	-	76	£3 16s 2d	£278 3s 4d	112	£12 8s 6d	£1,391 6s 8d	120	£17 16s 8d	£2,138			
SE3	-	-	-	56	£3 17s 10d	£217 13s 4d	111	£12 1s 10d	£1,342 6s 8d	98	£18 2s 8d	£1,776 6s 8d			
SW quarter	354	£ 7 3s 9d	£2,543 5s	346	£3 3s	£1,092 3s	456	£ 9 7s 10d	£4,283 13s 4d	424	£12 16s 6d	£5,433 16s 8d			
SW1	-	-	-	90	£3 9s 10d	£311 13s	136	£ 7 18s	£1,075	103	£12 0s 1d	£1,241 16s 8d			
SW2	-	-	-	109	£4 2s 10d	£451 8s 8d	185	£11 17s 10d	£2,195 13s 4d	206	£15 0s 9d	£3,096 13s 4d			
SW3	-	-	-	147	£2 4s 6d	£329 1s 4d	135	£ 7 10s	£1,013	115	£ 9 10s 10d	£1,095 6s 8d			



place of residence of the wealthiest merchants. The southern quarters were mainly inhabited by craftsmen, and were the areas in which manufacturing took place within the burgh.<sup>46</sup>

It would appear that the burgh magistrates were forced to increase the taxable population in order to meet the payments. Taking the highest and lowest number of payments made in the taxes the number of people taxed increased by forty-seven percent. There was a fifty-three percent overall increase in the north-west, and sixty-nine percent increase in the north-east, reflecting the growing wealth within these areas as well as the increased building which went on there during the first four decades of the century.<sup>47</sup> The taxable population of the south-east increased by forty-seven percent, and that of the south-west by thirty-two percent. The inhabitants of the north-west paid at least thirty-five percent of each of the taxes; a figure which rose to forty-three percent in 1637. The tax payers in the north-east paid between seventeen and twenty-five percent of the taxes. Those in the south-east paid between fifteen and twenty-one percent, and the tax payers of the south-west shouldered between nineteen and twenty-four percent of the burden - a reflection more of the number of tax payers in the quarter than their absolute wealth.

The extension of the tax net is also visible in the differences between the rolls of 1605 and 1614 and those of 1630 and 1637. The

---

46. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 14; McMillan, A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community, 162, 165, confirms this by using the annuity tax of 1635. She does point out that the south-east quarter's rental payments were, on average, quite high.

47. See below, p. 383.

first two rolls taxed only burgh inhabitants. Merchants, craftsmen and widows were assessed, they being the traditional wealth producers. The latter rolls assessed a much broader group within the burgh, and gave some indication of the reasons behind the assessments. The roll of 1630 makes mention of various inhabitants taxed for their land or money. Amongst others John Carstairs was taxed 'for his moneyis'; Hercules Cramond for his land; James Winram for his 'house official and his wiffis moneyis'; Henry Nisbet for 'his moneyis'; the widow of Mr. Andrew Logan was assessed for both his land and his daughter's money. Lady Marjorie Cockburn of Boghall was taxed; as was the laird of West Nisbet for his land. Robert Monteath in Orkney was assessed for his land; Thomas Craill, apothecary and John Finlayson, both of Dundee were taxed for their land; John Anderson in Perth was taxed for his land. Although they were exempt from taxation the town's ministers, agent, and schoolmaster were all listed. The burgh magistrates would appear to have assessed taxation not only by the traditional means of assessing a person's tax based upon their personal wealth or rent payments, but also upon their property within the burgh and their wealth in negotiable currency. This, perhaps, reflected the decision of the crown in 1621 to levy a tax upon the profits of lent money. Whatever the reason behind these differences it is evident that by the time of the 1630 tax a wider spectrum of people was included in the assessment - even if they were not resident in Edinburgh.

As with the 1630 roll it was not unusual in the 1637 roll to be assessed upon either property within the burgh or for money.

The roll taxed Sir Robert Fairlie for his money and Sir William Fairlie's daughter along with the bishop of Argyll for her money. Alexander Glen was taxed for himself and his son's trade; and John White, described as being in the Tolbooth, probably as a prisoner, was taxed for his money. The wife of Mr. James Reid, minister, was taxed for her land and money. Robert Inglis, a resident in London, was taxed £120 for his trade. Robert Monteath, described as a gentleman, was taxed for his money, as were James Adamson, James Drummond, James Douglas and Archibald Campbell, all similarly described. Lady Halton was taxed £13 6s. 8d. for her land; Lady Cardrona was assessed at £4 for hers; and Lord Corstorphine at £6 13s. 4d. for his. Mr. Robert Livingston, minister at Stirling, was taxed £3 6s. 8d. for his land, and Mr. John Charters, minister, was taxed for his money. Inhabitants of Leith, Bonnington and Orkney, as well as local lairds, were all taxed within Edinburgh. The basis of taxation had been extended by 1637 to include an assessment based upon business connections - described as for trade - as well as upon personal wealth, money and land within the burgh.

In each of the four rolls the assessments appear to be little more than a graduated scale of payments into which the person taxed was slotted. These ran in the 1605 roll from as little as 12s. 6d. at one end of the scale to as much as £200 at the other. The 1614 roll's payments went from 13s. 4d. to as much as £40; the 1630 roll's payments went from 20s. 0d. to as much as £400; and the 1637 roll's went from a low of 20s. 0d. to a high of £1,166 13s. 4d. In order to determine the wealthiest members of the burgh according to the stent rolls, it was decided to triple the average payment



and examine any merchant paying that sum or above. In 1605 the nearest assessment to three times the average was £28 15s. Seventy-six of the burgh's tax payers were assessed at that sum or over, paying a total of £5,198. This meant that in 1605 6.59 percent of the burgh's inhabitants paid 45.8 percent of the entire tax. In 1614 114 of the burgh's taxpayers paid £10 or over, amounting to a total of almost £1,909. Therefore, in 1614 10.12 percent of those liable to pay tax paid 42.67 percent of the tax. In 1630 128 of the burgh's tax payers paid over £32. They paid a total of £7,943 14s. 6d, meaning that 7.74 percent of those taxed paid 45.5 percent of the tax. In 1637 114 people paid over £52 13s. 4d. and were counted as the burgh elite. They paid a total of £12,365 9s. meaning that 7.19 percent of those taxed paid 45.13 percent of the total tax that year.

If an average of the four taxes is considered then 108 people paid 44.57 percent of each of the taxes. Given an average of 1,379 people assessed in each roll this meant that eight percent of the taxable population paid almost half of each tax during the first four decades of the century. If the four taxes are combined the total number of Edinburgh tax payers assessed as worth over three times the average payment is 310.<sup>48</sup> Given a population of Edinburgh of between 20,000 and 25,000 during these years it would seem that a group of less than two percent of the population were shouldering almost half of the tax burden within the burgh. Certainly this group was not static. The majority of the 310 tax payers considered to be amongst the elite were

---

48. See appendix VII.

assessed at over three times the average in only one tax.

A total of 219 tax payers paid within this tax-bracket only once; seventy-two paid in two taxes; fourteen in three; and only five paid at three times the average in all four taxes.

These included William Dick, David Mitchell, Peter Somerville, Alexander Telfer and David Alexander, although it was Alexander's widow who was responsible for the payments in 1630 and 1637.

Apart from the 1605 tax, William Dick constantly outstripped the other tax payers in his assessment. In 1605, while still quite a junior member of the burgh elite, he paid a tax of £37 10s. - .33 percent of the entire tax assessment. In 1614 he paid £40 - .89 percent of the entire tax; in 1630 he was assessed at £400 - 2.29 percent of the total; and in 1637 his assessment was a massive £1,166 13s. 4d. - equal to paying 4.25 percent of the total taxation.

While Dick was undoubtedly the wealthiest tax payer in the burgh others rivaled him. In 1605 fifteen of the seventy-six members of the elite each paid over one percent of the assessed tax. These included Thomas Inglis and Ninian McMorranne, who each paid £187 10s, or 1.65 percent of the tax; as well as John Morison and Patrick Ellis, who each paid £200, or 1.76 percent of the assessment. In 1614 twenty members of the elite each paid over £23 or .51 percent of the tax. These included six elite members who paid the top assessment of £40, or .89 percent of the tax; Andrew Creich, Patrick Ellis, older, Archibald Johnston, Ninian McMorranne and William Mauld as well as William Dick. In 1630 twelve members of the elite each paid over .76 percent of



the tax. These included four who each paid over one percent of the tax; Andrew Keith paid £180, 1.03 percent of the total; William Gray paid £200 or 1.14 percent of the total; Thomas Hannatyne paid £213 6s. 8d, or 1.22 percent of the total; and Dick paid £400, 2.29 percent of the tax. In 1637 six merchants paid over £220 each or .8 percent of the entire tax. Four paid over one percent each: James Murray, elder, paid £280 or 1.02 percent; Thomas Moodie paid £366 13s. 4d. or 1.33 percent; Patrick Wood paid £570 or 2.08 percent; and Dick paid £1,166 13s. 4d, over four percent of the entire tax collected. The majority of those considered as elite members, however, paid a stent considerably less than this. In 1605 forty-two percent of those taxed at over three times the average paid between £28 15s. and £37 10s, a range of from .25 percent to .33 percent of the tax. In 1614 fifty-seven percent of those taxed as the elite paid from £10 to £15 each, equal to between .22 percent and .33 percent of the total stent. In 1630 seventy-two percent of the elite each paid a stent of between £33 6s. 8d. and £60, running from .19 percent of the tax to .34 percent. In 1637 sixty-six percent of those taxed within the burgh as its wealthiest tax payers were stented at between £53 6s. 8d. and £93 6s. 8d each, or as having to pay from .19 percent to .34 percent each of the total tax.

Given that the definition of the burgh elite includes any person paying over three times the average payment in each of the four stent rolls, it is only to be expected that within this net a fairly wide spectrum of the burgh's inhabitants is caught. The vast majority of those assessed as the wealthiest

inhabitants of Edinburgh were merchants. Of the 310 persons considered to be amongst the elite only thirty-eight were not specifically merchants. The widows of ten merchants were taxed, as were the children of four merchants. One gentleman, Archibald Campbell, paid over three times the average in the 1637 tax. Three women were taxed in their own right. Grissel King was taxed as an elite member in 1630; Christian Morison was taxed in 1637; and Helen Scarlett, described as a widow, was assessed in 1630. Scarlett certainly operated as a merchant, most notably selling tobacco; and Morison was the daughter of a wealthy merchant.<sup>49</sup> Twenty craftsmen were taxed amongst the elite. These included a total of three goldsmiths, skimmers and tailors; two men described as apothecaries or poultrymen; and one representative each of the embroiderers, wrights, printers, surgeons, cutlers, cooks and fishmen were amongst the elite. Nineteen of the craftsmen were burgesses, and, in addition, the three goldsmiths, as well as one each of the skimmers, tailors and apothecaries were also members of the guildry. The others taxed in the rolls were merchants.

Within sixteenth and seventeenth-century Scottish burgh society the definition of what a merchant was could embrace a wide section of people indeed. It has been stated that in mid-sixteenth-century Scotland 'a merchant might mean an overseas trader, combining wealth and influence, or a seed seller in a booth

---

49. Edin. Tests, 16 June 1632; RPC, xi, 8, 247, 357. Morison is described as daughter of the late Harry M. in the 1637 tax roll. See appendix VII.

in the market place, combining poverty with obscurity'.<sup>50</sup> Certainly the tax rolls of 1605, 1614, 1630 and 1637 indicate that merchants, as well as craftsmen, were taxed in the lower as well as upper tax brackets. Counting the thirteen widows and children taxed amongst the elite as, in fact, having been taxed as merchants, a total of 285 out of the 310 persons assessed in the four taxes at over three times the average were, thus, merchants. Certainly the greater part of those taxed as merchants were both burgesses and members of the guildry.

Recent examinations concerned with the idea of mercantile status in Scottish burghs during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have generally concluded that it was guild membership which was becoming the all important factor within the trading fraternity during these years. In early sixteenth century Dunfermline - a burgh with a population of no more than 1,100 - approximately fourteen percent of the inhabitants were burgesses, and about a third of these were also members of what has been called 'the gild'. Yet, there is no suggestion that at this time the guildry was the exclusive preserve of a merchant oligarchy, although there can be little doubt that membership of it did confer status.<sup>51</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century,

---

50. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 50. The divisions within society were not those of merchant versus craftsmen but wealthy merchants and craftsmen versus their less wealthy brethren. This would also appear to be true for Dunfermline in the fifteenth century (Torrie, The Gild of Dunfermline, 179).

51. Ibid., 176-83, 190, 193, 221-2 stress the idea that the Dunfermline gild developed as a fraternal society and that the gild in 1500 was a rather more open society than it would become in the next century.



however, membership of the guildry was the all-important factor within Aberdeen merchant circles.<sup>52</sup> To be a member of that social elite conferred not only definite status but, more importantly, granted the right to trade abroad. A study of the Edinburgh burgh community between 1600 and 1680 states that few of the wealthiest traders were not burghesses and stresses that it was guildry membership which was the all important factor in determining wealth and status.<sup>53</sup> As far as the burgh elite were concerned this may not be quite correct.

A total of 8,000 burghesses were entered into the Edinburgh burgh roll during the seventeenth century. Thirty-seven percent of these were merchants. Some forty-five percent of those granted burghessship were also admitted as members of the guildry, and, indeed, sixty-two percent of these guild members were merchants.<sup>54</sup> According to these figures, out of a total of approximately 2,960 merchants granted Edinburgh burghessship in the seventeenth century, some 2,232, or seventy-five percent were also admitted to the guildry. The same study concludes that at any given point during the century, there were probably about 2,000 burghesses within the city, and that the number of merchants in Edinburgh in 1600 was somewhere between 550 and 600.<sup>55</sup> Not all of these would have been

---

52. MacNiven, *Merchant and Trader*, 116-7, 118, 280-1. Not all members of the guildry were merchants. The Aberdeen guildry included lawyers. See also Smout, 'The Glasgow merchant community', 59.

53. McMillan, *A Study of the Edinburgh Burgh Community*, 24, 29.

54. *Ibid.*, 30, 38, 40. She states that thirty percent of the male population were burghesses.

55. *Ibid.*, 34, 38.

either burghesses or guild members. If the general statistic given of thirty-seven percent of all burghesses being merchants is correct, this would mean that of 2,000 burghesses, 740 would have been merchant burghesses, and of these 558 would also be members of the guildry. If it is accepted that in 1600 there were apparently 550 to 600 merchants in the burgh then almost all of these would have been burghesses, and members of the guildry, which is highly unlikely. The figure given of 550 to 600 merchants in the burgh in 1600 seems, therefore, too high. The tax roll of 1605 lists only 449 men taxed as merchants, equal to thirty-nine percent of the taxable population. The 1614 roll lists 479 men as merchants, equal to forty-three percent of the taxable population. In 1630 458 men are listed as merchants, equalling twenty-eight percent of the taxable populace. The stent roll of 1637 mentions 438 merchants, again twenty-eight percent of the population liable to pay tax. Even taking into account the fact that merchant's widows and children are not included in this count, and that there are men listed in the roll with no mention of their status, and allowing for general exemptions, the number of working merchants in any of the stent rolls falls far short of the estimated 550-600, even in the later rolls where the tax net was being cast more widely across burgh society. There were probably no more than 450-500 merchants active within the burgh in any one year during the first forty years of the century.<sup>56</sup>

---

56. The tax roll of 1581 lists a total of 527 neighbours. This includes women, apothecaries, carters, buttermen, unfree fleshers, stablers. M. Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (unpublished University of London Ph.D, 1977), 425-36.

A comparison of the numbers of merchants taxed in each of the four rolls with the number taxed as the elite confirms that a relatively small percentage of the merchant populace was paying a large proportion of the tax. The 1605 roll included seventy-six members of the elite who paid forty-five percent of the entire tax and were equal to only about seventeen percent of the actual number of merchants taxed. In 1614, 114 elite members paid almost forty-three percent of the tax, made up only about twenty-four percent of the total number of merchants stented. In 1630 128 members of the elite paid forty-five percent of the tax and were equal to twenty-eight percent of all merchants stented that year. In 1637 the 114 elite who paid forty-five percent of the tax were equal to twenty-six percent of the number of merchants taxed in the roll.<sup>57</sup> Certainly as the century progressed a higher percentage of the merchants taxed were included as the burgh's top tax payers. However, it would appear that it was usual that less than a quarter of those taxed within Edinburgh as merchants paid almost fifty percent of the tax.

If, as has been argued, membership of the guildry conferred privilege and status upon a merchant, the group paying almost half of the tax were without doubt well to the fore in both these respects.<sup>58</sup> Of the total of 285 persons taxed as merchants in the four rolls who paid amongst the top tax bracket 184 - over sixty-four percent - were both burgesses and guild members. Forty-nine, seventeen percent, were merely burgesses, and two merchants were

---

57. The twenty craftsmen, one gentleman and four women are included as merchants for this purpose.

58. Burgess and guildry status are listed under each merchant in appendix VII.



simply registered as guild members. Only fifty merchants were not registered as either burgesses or guild members in the period up to 1650. If the craftsmen taxed amongst the elite are included, then out of an elite of 310 members, 192, or sixty-two percent, were both burgesses and guild members; sixty-one, or twenty percent, were merely burgesses; two were members of the guildry; and only fifty-five, less than eighteen percent, were not registered as either. The wealthiest inhabitants of the burgh were also those who had been admitted into the burgh's inner circle. It was they who had the undisputed right to govern the burgh, enjoy its privileges and, probably of first import, to trade overseas.

Marriage into an established Edinburgh burgess family has been shown to have been the most important factor behind the granting of burgess status to both merchants and craftsmen between 1600 and 1649.<sup>59</sup> Thirty-seven percent of those admitted as burgesses in those years did so by the right of their wives. Twenty-eight percent were admitted as the sons of burgesses; twenty-three percent by purchase; twelve percent as apprentices of burgesses, and less than one percent gratis. These figures reveal the importance which was placed in Edinburgh society before 1650 on marriage, as well as the apparent openness and social mobility of that society which allowed for such an influx of burgess members.<sup>60</sup> Certainly this would appear to complement the findings of a study of the Glasgow burgess community at much the same period, which states

---

59. McMillan, *A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 48.

60. Ibid., 49. This openness and social mobility was to decline in the later years of the century.

that marriage played an important role in gaining admission to that burgh's upper echelons.<sup>61</sup> The reasons for admission of the Edinburgh elite into burgh and guildry status is almost equally divided between the three major methods of entry. A total of eighty-eight of the elite were entered either as burgesses or as guild members by right of their wives. This is equal to almost thirty-five percent of all those entered, prior to 1650. Eighty-four, or thirty-three percent, were admitted as sons of burgesses or guild members. Seventy-two of the elite, twenty-eight percent, were admitted either by purchase, by pledge to another merchant or craftsman, or as brothers of burgesses. Eleven, four percent, were granted burgh and guildry membership by a combination of methods; for example becoming burgesses by purchase or pledge and then entering the guildry by right of their wives. Eight of the eleven, however, were granted burgh status by right of their fathers, but entered the guildry by right of their wives. Although their fathers were burgesses they were not members of the guildry, further emphasising the importance of a suitable marriage in order to achieve top status within burgh society before 1650. Only one of the elite, Alexander Miller, a tailor, was granted burghship gratis, this by order of James VI, to whom Miller was tailor.

Although the majority of the burgh elite between 1600 and 1638 were both burgesses and guild members it would appear that to some slight extent the traditional importance which burgh and guild membership had held over medieval burgh society was being called into question. To fifteenth and sixteenth-century burgh society

---

61. Smout, 'The Glasgow merchant community', 68-9.

both burgess and guildry membership was almost a prerequisite to being a wealthy merchant and guildry membership was certainly required to being an overseas trader.<sup>62</sup> It was necessary to have been a burgess at least in order to have been eligible for service on the town council. However, strict adherence to these requirements was not always followed in Edinburgh from the 1580s. From 1584 sons of burgesses were taxed by the town magistrates, before they had been granted burgess status.<sup>63</sup> Having been taxed by the burgh it would not, then, have been surprising if they had assumed the rights of burgess-ship and have traded, even to foreign ports. It is, however, not possible to determine which event - the tax or the trade - came first, but it is likely to have been the taxation imposed by the burgh which prompted the trade. At least nineteen of the elite were taxed as members of the elite before becoming burgesses.<sup>64</sup> Admittedly, most of these were included in the 1630 and 1637 rolls which had further broadened the tax base. However, George Wauchope was taxed in 1605 but did not become a burgess and guild member until 1630; Henry Morison and James Hamilton were both taxed in 1605 but did not become burgess or guild members until 1609. The 1614 tax roll included Walter Finlay and David McCall who were not entered burgess and guild until 1616, and James Richardson who became a burgess only in 1615. Twenty members of the elite traded overseas without being members of the guildry. Indeed,

---

62. Ibid., 59.

63. Lynch, 'Whatever happened to the medieval burgh', 10.

64. This does not include the fifty elite members for whom there are no records of either burgessship or guildry membership.



James Rae, younger, John Winram and Thomas Munro all traded abroad without even being burghesses. The others included George Stirling who imported cloth from London in May 1623, but did not become a burghess or guild member until 1626. William Gray exported goods to Norway as early as 1612, and imported grain from the Baltic and Holland in 1622-3 but was admitted as a burghess and guild member only in 1627, by right of his wife. James Aleson and John Bisset, while burghesses, were never members of the guildry, yet both traded overseas. The most obvious evidence of the lessening of the need to be either a burghess or guild member in order to serve the burgh was the fact that three members of the elite served on the town council before becoming burghesses. William Nisbet sat on the town council of 1600-01, but did not become a burghess or guild member until November 1601; Joseph Marjoribanks was elected to the town council of 1601-2, but was not admitted as burghess and guild member until 1602; and Thomas Charters was a councillor in 1622-3 although he was not a burghess or guild member until 1624. Certainly these three were all sons of burghess and guild members and were, thus, probably treated as burghesses before the legal formalities were undergone. The first forty years of the seventeenth century may have witnessed a challenge to the total dominance of the burgh by the institution which had been the lynch pin of medieval mercantile society - the guildry. However, at least as far as most of the elite were concerned access to wealth and influence within Edinburgh was made perceptively easier if one was both a burghess and guild member.

Any attempt made at analyzing the occupational structure of seventeenth-century Edinburgh's merchant elite with the intention

of comparing it to English studies is immediately frustrated by the definition of 'merchant' within Scottish burgh society. As stated previously, a merchant in Scotland may be little more than a peddler. Alternatively, even the wealthiest of merchants may be what could be termed as a 'general provisioner' rather than as a supplier of any particular commodity. Recent studies of the structure of wealth within English towns have tended to follow the established pattern of breaking society into ten major occupations. These include: (1) food and drink, consisting of brewers, cooks, innkeepers, poulterers, victuallers and vintners; (2) clothing, including hosiers and tailors; (3) textiles, including weavers, cloth workers, embroiderers and wool chapmen; (4) metals, including armourers, cutlers, and goldsmiths; (5) woodwork, including furniture makers, wheel wrights and coopers; (6) distributive, which included apothecaries, drapers, grocers, haberdashers, wax chandlers, merchants, and stationers; (7) building, which includes bricklayers, carpenters, masons and joiners; (8) leather, including cobblers, glovers, skimmers and tanners; (9) transport, meaning mariners, carriers and watermen; and finally, professional which encompasses surgeons, schoolmasters, musicians and scriveners.<sup>65</sup> The division of occupations within English towns was sufficiently clear-cut to make these categories workable for the purposes of analysis. To apply them to Scottish burghs in general, and seventeenth-century Edinburgh in particular, is to render them virtually meaningless.

---

65. J.F. Pound, 'The social and trade structure of Norwich, 1525-1575', in P. Clark (ed.), The Early Modern Town (1976), 141-5. This structure is used by Evans, Seventeenth Century Norwich, 20-1; M. Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth-century Ipswich', in P. Clark (ed.), Countrv Towns in Pre-Industrial England (Leicester, 1981), 102; P. Corfield, 'A provincial capital in the late seventeenth century: the case of Norwich' in P. Clark, The Early Modern Town, 233-72. W.T. MacCaffrey, Exeter 1540-1640 (1975), 163 uses only seven occupational divisions but they are similar to Pound's.

It was perfectly possible for a member of the Edinburgh merchant elite to belong to more than one of the occupational divisions utilized by English borough historians. The majority of the elite had their fingers in more than one economic pie. Exclusivity of merchandising was not a pervasive part of Edinburgh's wealthiest traders business, although certain forms of trading were preferred. Most of the elite were involved in some form of retailing of cloth, grain or hardware. Only a few merchants dealt only in a single item, and they were mostly cloth merchants. More typical were merchants such as Thomas Bannatyne. In 1615 his merchant wares consisted of a combination of cloth, sweet meats, pepper, spices, raisins, paper and jewellery.<sup>66</sup> Twenty years later he seemed to have abandoned the cloth trade in favour of selling sweetmeats, sugar and small merchant wares.<sup>67</sup> Andrew Ainslie dealt in wax, salt, tar, grain, herring, wool, sheepskins and timber as well as owning ships which he probably leased to other merchants.<sup>68</sup> John Fairlie similarly owned shares in vessels, may have been involved in the carrying trade, as well as merchandising lead from his mines and brewing beer.<sup>69</sup> Charles Hamilton exported wool, sheepskins and plaiding between 1611 and 1628; imported cloves, hemp, raisins, onion seed, grain, cloth and wax in

---

66. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Little, 29 Dec. 1615.

67. Edin. Tests, 28 Oct. 1635.

68. SR0, E71/29/7, 8, 9, 11; E71/30/30; Edin. Tests, 25 July 1648; ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 30 Jan. 1622.

69. Edin. Tests, 15 Mar. 1621; RPC, xii, 335; ECA, DGCR, iii, 29 July 1618.



the 1620s; and at the time of his death in 1640 was dealing in salt and iron.<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Henderson traded in a mixture of cloth both fancy and plain, iron, fish, hides, wool, onion seed, hemp, pots, paper, dyestuff and grain between 1612 and 1628.<sup>71</sup> In the twenty years after 1621 David Jenkin traded in a mixture of groceries, such as sugar, raisins and apples, cloth, canvas, knithose, grain, pitch, tar, iron and drugs. At the time of his death in 1641 his inventory of goods consisted of such diverse commodities as coal, grain, salt, wine, clothing, tobacco and shares in seven vessels which were probably involved in the carriage trade.<sup>72</sup> Between 1622 and 1632 Alan Livingston traded in a mixture of salt, grain, wax, herring, Spanish and French wine, cloth and vinegar, as well as manufacturing the last two items in Edinburgh; he was also involved in the shipping industry of the burgh.<sup>73</sup> Patrick Wood made his fortune by selling general haberdashery - hats, belts, gloves, stockings - as well as cloth, linen yarn and wool. However, he also traded in coal, salt, herring, grain, manufactured rope and chartered vessels to other merchants.<sup>74</sup>

---

70. SRO, E71/29/6, 7, 8, 9, 11; Edin. Tests, 27 Mar. 1640.

71. SRO, E71/29/6, 7, 8, 9, 11; E71/30/30; Edin. Tests, Bessie Hamilton, 8 Jan. 1624.

72. SRO, E71/29/7, 8; E71/30/30; ECA, DGCR, iv, 7 Apr. 1624; Edin. Tests, Margaret Lauder, 10 June 1626; 1 Mar. 1643.

73. SRO, E71/30/30, E71/29/7, 8; Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633.

74. SRO, E71/29/7, 8; RMS, ix, 68, ECA, DGCR, iv, 19 Mar. 1634; see appendix VII.

This pattern of the wealthiest members of the burgh being involved in more than one branch of commerce is a common one, repeated time and time again.<sup>75</sup> Certainly, such merchandising practices appear to be little more than a repetition of the traditional, medieval methods of diversifying capital into many forms in order to minimize risk.<sup>76</sup> Yet, they also indicate the stronghold which the elite had over the mercantile economy of seventeenth-century Edinburgh. Few, if any, of the branches of the economy did not involve the burgh's merchant princes.

Within Edinburgh society between 1600 and 1638 there existed a dominant group of wealthy merchants. This group, comprising less than two percent of the entire population of the burgh, paid almost half of the burgh's share of tax during these years. Despite the burgeoning demands made upon them by both the crown and the Convention of Royal Burghs for capital the burgh elite managed to control most of the areas of commerce and trade within Edinburgh. While the categories and institutions of medieval society - the traditional strictures imposed by both burgh customs and laws - remained in effect in the early years of the seventeenth century, their force was less pervasive, and the burgh elite were able to manipulate them to their advantage. Burgess-ship and guildry membership were no longer regarded as mandatory to successful overseas trade by this group who imported and exported almost at will. Despite the growing population within Edinburgh

---

75. See appendix VII. This pattern is in opposition to Aberdeen where the wealthiest merchants in the seventeenth century were specialized traders. MacNiven, *Merchant and Trader*, 279.

76. Lythe, *The Economy of Scotland*, 128; Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 196-7.

the elite managed to dominate the political as well as financial institutions of the burgh. Within the elite there existed side by side two smaller circles in which the bulk of real wealth and power resided. On the one hand there was a close-knit group of merchant traders, some specialized in importing, some in exporting, with the bulk of their profits made in the cloth and grain trade, in addition to their interests in moneylending, commodity speculation and landholding. Representative of this group were men such as Alexander Brown, Patrick Wood, Alexander Monteath and William Wilkie, successful traders but not involved in politics. On the other hand, there also existed a much smaller group of no more than sixty men whose economic portfolio was equally as wide but who also tended to have a political career. Typical of these men who effectively controlled the burgh's political decisions were Alexander Clerk, William Dick and James Rocheid. It was recognized that in a society where opportunities to gain influence were becoming ever more limited due to its oligarchical structure, service upon the town council was as important a route to success as the more traditional commercial activities. The influence of the elite, however, extended beyond the burgh throughout the rest of the country. The social, political and economic influences which a group of 300 men had were to have far-reaching effects and by 1640 profound consequences upon Scotland as a whole.



## CHAPTER TWO

THE CIVIC DUTIES OF THE BURGH ELITE

Early modern European town politics have long been regarded by historians as having been the prerogative of wealthy merchant oligarchies. The assumption has been that most town councils tended to be little more than self-perpetuating, and self-elected patriciates with the wealthiest men of the town being accustomed to hand over control of civic affairs to their equally affluent kith-and-kin. Examinations of the town councils of such places as Newcastle, Exeter, Leiden and Lille have shown that their urban politics functioned much in this fashion.<sup>1</sup> The town politics of Edinburgh in the early seventeenth century reveal the existence of much the same pattern. It has been stated, however, that while the political institutions of mid-sixteenth century Edinburgh were indeed dominated by a select group of wealthy mercantile families, this group was not a closed patriciate. Those viewed as both particularly able or wealthy were admitted into town politics, whatever their blood connections to the ruling elite.<sup>2</sup> It does seem that this situation was in many respects to alter over the next hundred years. It may be argued that between 1600 and 1640 the burgh's

---

1. Howell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution, chapter 2; W.G. Hoskins, 'The Elizabethan merchants of Exeter' in P. Clark (ed.), The Early Modern Town (1976), 149; S.A. Lamet, Men in Government: The Patriciate of Leiden 1550-1600 (unpublished University of Massachusetts Ph.D, 1979), 133-40, 252, 264; R. Duplessis and C. Howell, 'Reconsidering the early modern urban economy: the cases of Leiden and Lille', Past and Present, 94 (1982), 76. Norwich was not dominated by an oligarchy and the Ipswich oligarchy had been broken by 1640 (Evans, Seventeenth Century Norwich, chapters 1 and 2; Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth-century Ipswich', 91).

2. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 15-16, 172.

politics became less the concern of those being ruled and more the exclusive preserve of the town's wealthiest merchants. By 1640 almost all of the positions on the town council open to merchants were held by members of the elite. However, only a small proportion of the town's merchant princes were involved in the political processes of the burgh. Within the elite there existed a group of no more than fifty or sixty of the burgh's dominant merchants who recognized that one of the routes to power and influence within Edinburgh included political service. The elite's dominance of the burgh's political institutions included not only the town council but they also served as the town's constables, as well as on the kirk council and as kirk session members. Over the first forty years of the seventeenth century few of the town's political pies did not have the fingers of a member of the elite intruded into them.

It may be argued that the wealthiest men of any town were usually the ones directing the pattern of that town's politics. Edinburgh, in the first half of the seventeenth century, certainly reflected this. The merchant elite played a dominant role on the town council.<sup>3</sup> The council was elected every Michaelmas by a complicated procedure of both old and new council members meeting to choose the provost, four bailies, dean of guild and treasurer from a list of eligible merchants submitted to them for approval several days previously. Concurrently the ordinary councillors were selected, including two new council members each year. No lists of those eligible for this service exist

---

3. This evidence is based on the lists of those elected to the town council every Michaelmas between 1600-40 printed in Edin. Recs, 1589-1641.

TABLE 2. NUMBERS OF ELITE ON TOWN COUNCIL

Seventeen positions open to merchants.

DATE	P	B	B	B	B	DG	T	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	TOTAL
1599-1600		X	X			X	X	X	X	X							7
1600-01		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X						9
1601-02		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X					10
1602-03		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			13
1603-04		X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
1604-05		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				11
1605-06		X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			10
1606-07		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					11
1607-08		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13
1608-09		X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			9
1609-10		X					X	X	X	X	X	X					7
1610-11		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			12
1611-12		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		14
1612-13		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14
1613-14		X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
1614-15		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			11
1615-16		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		13
1616-17	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			12
1617-18	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		12
1618-19	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			12
1619-20	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		13
1620-21		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		13
1621-22		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		13
1622-23	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		15
1623-24	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
1624-25	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
1625-26		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		14
1626-27		X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
1627-28		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		13
1628-29		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13
1629-30		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
1630-31	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		15
1631-32	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		15
1632-33	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	17
1633-34	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
1634-35		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		14
1635-36		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15
1636-37		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		14
1637-38		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
1638-39	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	17
1639-40	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		15

Source: Edin. Recs., 1589-1641 (3 vols.).

For an explanation of abbreviations used, see below, p. 423.



suggesting, perhaps, that these men were appointed at the discretion of those already in office. This method assured that those chosen to govern the town were those considered most able and worthy by their peers, imposing both an amount of stability on the council and leaving little room for 'democratic' election of their rulers by the populace. The council consisted of the seven administrative positions stated above, as well as twelve ordinary councillors, two of whom were craft representatives. A further fourteen men were chosen from the craft guilds to serve as councillors, six serving as deacon councillors, the senior representatives of the craft guilds on the burgh council. Of the thirty-three positions on each council seventeen were open solely to merchants, the top seven positions of provost, bailie, dean of guild, and treasurer, as well as ten of the posts of councillor. This ensured that merchants were a majority in any of the decisions made by the town council.

The first forty years of the seventeenth century saw an increasing tendency for members of the burgh's merchant elite to be in control of the town council. On average during these years thirteen of the seventeen positions on the council open to merchants were filled by members of the elite, ensuring that the burgh's merchant prince's voice was dominant in any of the burgh's political decisions.<sup>4</sup> This supports the statement made about sixteenth century Edinburgh politics that the wealthier a merchant was the more likely it became that he would hold civic office.<sup>5</sup> The numbers of the elite serving on the council between 1600 and

---

4. See Table 2.

5. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 16.

1640 ran from a low figure of seven in 1599-1600 and 1609-10 to a high peak of seventeen, all positions open to merchants, in 1632-2 and 1638-9. At no point after the elections of Michaelmas 1610 did the elite provide less than twelve members of the council. The relatively low numbers of the elite on the council before 1610 may be an artificial statistic, reflecting not that the council was open to the less wealthy but that it was dominated by an older generation - the elite of the 1580s and 1590s. They may not have been included as amongst the elite in the roll of 1605 due to their retiral from merchandising, or business reverses. Certainly twenty-five of the elite members sitting on the town council between 1600 and 1640 had been elected on to the council prior to 1600.<sup>6</sup>

Of these twelve: James Inglis, Nicol Udard, John Morison, John Robertson, William Nisbet, John Jackson, David Williamson, Patrick Cochrane, Richard Dobie, Patrick Ellis, John Fairlie and Ninian McMorran; were all taxed as members of the elite in the tax roll of 1583.<sup>7</sup> The council prior to 1610 was dominated by an older

---

6. The merchants serving on the council before 1600 were: George Heriot from 1591; Alexander Clerk from 1575; Patrick Cochrane from 1581; Richard Dobie from 1589; Patrick Ellis from 1598; John Fairlie from 1581; James Inglis, older from 1585; Thomas Inglis from 1595; John Jackson from 1584; Ninian McMorran from 1592; William Mauld from 1582; John Morison from 1582; James Nisbet from 1592; William Nisbet from 1582; Alexander Pierson from 1591; William Rig from 1588; John Robertson from 1573; Thomas Spier from 1599; William Spier from 1596; Archibald Johnston from 1588; George Todrig from 1591; Nicol Udard from 1562; John Wilkie from 1579; David Williamson from 1578 and Alexander McMath from 1598. Edin. Recs., 1573-89; 1589-1603.

7. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 378-9. The elite in 1583 was determined by multiplying the average tax paid by three.

generation for only six of the elite elected before 1600 served as council members after 1620, and of these only three served after 1630. The majority of the older men ended their council service sometime between 1610 and 1619 allowing younger members of the elite to replace them on the council.

The top seven administrative positions in the burgh - provost, the four bailies, dean of guild and treasurer - also reflect the growing dominance of elite members on the council from 1610. The position of provost was for the most part a titular position, occupied by crown appointees or men not directly merchants. Up to October 1608 the position was held by Alexander, Lord Fyvie, created earl of Dunfermline in 1605. From 1608 Sir John Arnot of Berswick, treasurer depute of Scotland, held the post until 1616. Although Arnot was not himself a merchant, he was related to an important Edinburgh mercantile family. David Aikenhead held the position between 1620-22, 1625-30 and 1634-7. He was a merchant but was not, however, taxed as a member of the elite. Sir John Hay, the Clerk Register, was elected provost in 1637 although he was not a merchant. There can be little doubt that Dunfermline was continually elected provost due to the direct influence of the king.<sup>8</sup> In 1608 the king attempted to restrict the election of nobles to civic office in all burghs, and to this end wrote to Edinburgh town council on 21st September in order to ratify an

---

8. Lord Fyvie was elected provost in 1598 at the direct insistence of James VI who replaced John Robertson, a merchant, on the list by Fyvie (Edin. Recs., 1593-1603, 236).



act of Parliament 'in that the administration of the town  
 sould be committed to nane bot sic as being of the estaitt  
 of burgessis ... and thairfore ... will and command you before  
 the laitt corruption of the chesing of nobilmen ... [and command  
 you to] ... mak choice of one of your awin burgessis for your  
 provost...'.<sup>9</sup>

The election of Arnot proceeded despite this  
 injunction. The council was forced to send commissioners to  
 James in November 1608 to explain the reasons behind the election.<sup>10</sup>  
 These reasons, which are nowhere stated but were perhaps based on  
 his close relations with the burgh's merchants, obviously  
 satisfied the king as Arnot remained provost until his death  
 in 1616. From 1616 the position of provost was held by an  
 Edinburgh merchant, except for the rather special circumstances  
 of the year 1637-8, when, again due to royal interference Sir  
 John Hay was imposed upon the council.<sup>11</sup> For thirteen years  
 during this period the position was held by three well respected  
 and wealthy members of the merchant elite. From 1616 to 1619  
 the provost was William Nisbet of Dean, from 1619-20, 1622-5 and  
 1630-4 Alexander Clerk held the position and William Dick of Braid  
 was elected between 1638 and 1640.<sup>12</sup>

The dominance of the elite on the council after 1610 is also  
 reflected in the election of elite members to serve as bailies.  
 After the election of 1609 the number of the wealthiest merchants

---

9. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 44. This repeated a similar act of  
 1535, see APS, ii, 349.

10. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 47.

11. Ibid., 1626-41, 194. See also below, p. 390.

12. See appendix VII. All three men were knighted.

serving as bailies never fell below half of the available posts, and even then they held merely two of the four positions on only three councils.<sup>13</sup> On fifteen councils after 1609 all four posts of bailie were held by elite members, ten of these occasions after the election of 1627. The office of bailie was the most time-consuming of positions on the town council, requiring attendance of at least one bailie at the thrice weekly council meetings, or as judges and witnesses at the burgh courts, as representatives of the town at both the Convention of Royal Burghs and at parliament, as well as attendance at all of the town's social functions such as the riding of the town boundaries, the presenting of earth and stone at the infeftment of land and at special town dinners.

A member of the merchant elite filled the role of dean of guild twenty-seven times between 1600 and 1640, yet only thirteen different merchants held the post, eleven of whom were elite merchants.<sup>14</sup> Service as dean of guild ran from as few times as once by Nicol Udard in 1632-3 and William Dick in 1633-4, to as often as five times by John Robertson between 1600-02 and 1604-07, and six times by John Byres from 1620 to 1626. Most of the merchants elected dean of guild served at least two consecutive years in the post before retiring. While the dean of guild's role was not as taxing as that of the bailies it was certainly influential. His duties included the settling of trading and neighbourhood disputes in the dean of guild court, as well as supervising burgess entries. The dean of guild was also

---

13. See table 2.

14. David Aikenhead served as dean of guild from 1613-20.

responsible for the upkeep of the various parish churches, for the control of shipping and the registration of cargoes, the supervision of weights and measures, and he also dealt with such matters as granting planning permission for building construction.<sup>15</sup>

The position that the merchant elite dominated in all but one of the first forty years of the seventeenth century was that of town treasurer.<sup>16</sup> Twenty different elite merchants functioned as Edinburgh's financial comptroller, a position to which wealthy businessmen were particularly well suited. Six of these merchants served only once as treasurer but the usual pattern was to be elected to the post for two consecutive years before retiring. This happened in eight cases. Only two merchants served three times as treasurer and only two served more than that. John Byres was treasurer between 1613 and 1617, and Thomas Speir served in that post from 1607 to 1612. The position must have been a fairly onerous one both in time and personal finance. Thomas Speir petitioned on 3 October 1609 to be exempted from the office of bailie in the future as he had been in public office for the last ten years which had not only interfered with his private business affairs but, as treasurer, he had had to advance his own money for the common good as well as the public works, mills and Leith.<sup>17</sup>

---

15. D. Robertson and M. Wood, Castle and Town - Chapters in the History of the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1928), 216-8.

16. This was in 1603-04 when the treasurer was Hector Rae, himself related to a powerful elite family.

17. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 54. He was granted this on condition that he did not refuse the position of treasurer when elected. It is interesting to note that Speir had not been listed as bailie on the list of 29 Sept. 1609 and the issue must have been decided well before the election of 4 Oct. 1609 (ECA, MSS, ETCR, xii, 29 Sept. 1609). Speir's request was not unprecedented. In June 1606 Patrick Cochrane accepted the post of treasurer in place of the late John Jackson only on the condition of being exempted from the post of bailie for the next three years (ibid., xi, 4 June 1606).



The idea of corporate responsibility for town finance did not seem to exist at this time. It would appear that the treasurer was still personally responsible to make up any discrepancy between income and discharge and later claim it back from the council. Speir was forced to make up a loss of over £3,000 between 1607 and 1612.<sup>18</sup> William Rae, treasurer in 1617-8, was left with a debt of over £7,000 during his year in office which he had paid out of his own pocket for in 1619 he claimed that 17,000 merks was owed to him by the provost, bailies and council of Edinburgh.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Peter Somerville, treasurer between 1619 and 1621 made good a debt in town finances of over £20,000 of which £15,000 remained owing to him by the town council in February 1622.<sup>20</sup> Certainly the responsibilities and resultant financial burdens of this post, as well as those of the other administrative positions, must have made many merchants wary of accepting high office, for in November 1605 the town council issued a statute requiring that anyone so elected accept civic position without any '... frievol or fenyeit excussis...' under pain of arrest and fine.<sup>21</sup>

The elite dominated burghal politics, yet real political power was vested in only 108 of the 310 merchants considered to

---

18. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, p.xlviii. This must have been repaid to him as it is not mentioned in his testament of 1616. Edin. Tests, 5 June 1616.

19. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, p.xlviii; Edin. Tests, 28 Oct. 1619.

20. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, p.xlviii; Edin. Tests, Margaret Stark, 24 Oct. 1635.

21. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 16.

be the wealthiest men in the burgh. Less than thirty-five percent of the elite served on the council at any time over the forty years. However, the hard-core of those involved was much smaller in fact. Of the 108 merchants thirty-five served on the council only once, leaving seventy-three merchants, or about twenty-four percent of the elite, to control the burgh's political future. The reasons for serving only once on the council may not have been due solely to lack of interest in civic affairs. Poor health or premature death, as well as retirement due to old age, could limit council service. James Johnston served only once as a councillor in 1614-5 and died in April 1617 without having been re-elected.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Patrick Wood served only on the council of 1636-7 and died in December 1638.<sup>23</sup> Both John Spence and John Wilkie served only once as councillors in 1624-5 and 1608-09 respectively but Wilkie had served on town councils prior to 1600.<sup>24</sup>

The very nature of the election process ensured a stability and easy continuation from one burgh government to the next. The election on to the council followed a somewhat set pattern. A merchant would normally be elected on to the council as an ordinary merchant councillor for a year. Then a break from civic service of at least two, if not more, years occurred before re-selection on to the council as either a bailie, treasurer or dean of guild.<sup>25</sup> This method provided not only a proving ground for the

---

22. Edin. Tests, 2 July 1618.

23. Edin. Tests, 22 Mar. 1639. His election so late in life does imply a certain disinclination to involve himself in burgh politics.

24. See above, n. 6.

25. This pattern happened to all the elite serving on the council except for three merchants, John Inglis, Henry Morison and Alexander Speir, who followed their initial service as a councillor by re-election as an ordinary councillor rather than as a magistrate.

mettle of a prospective magistrate but also ensured that the time-consuming administrative posts were filled by the younger and, perhaps, more ambitious men. On average any member of the elite interested in civic affairs served on seven councils between 1600 and 1640. Few of the elite showed political ambition on the scale of Joseph Marjoribanks who served on fourteen councils; William Dick who served on sixteen; John Byres who was on seventeen; William Nisbet on eighteen; Alexander Pierson on nineteen; or Alexander Clerk who served on twenty-one of the town councils between 1600 and 1640.

The more usual pattern of service was as that followed by four merchants: Thomas Charters, William Gray, David McCall and William Reid. Thomas Charters was typical of an ambitious merchant entering town politics in order to advance himself. He served first as a councillor in 1622-3 when he must have been still quite a young man, involved in building up his fortune.<sup>26</sup> He married in 1619 and was granted burgess-ship and guildry membership in 1624 as the son of Henry Charters. Thomas did not pay tax as a member of the elite until the tax roll of 1637, and he died in 1646. He served as bailie in 1627-8, some five years after his first election, served as councillor in 1628-9, 1632-3 and 1639-40, as well as serving as a bailie in 1631-2 and 1638-9. During these years he was also an active cloth merchant intent on using his position on the council to his economic advantage. By 1631 he had borrowed £1,740 from his fellow councillor, William Gray.<sup>27</sup> In many respects

---

26. For information on Charters, see appendix VII.

27. Edin. Tests, Agnes Byres, 4 Feb. 1632.



Gray's political career mirrors that of Charters. Slightly older than Charters, Gray married for the first time in 1612 and was entered as a burgess in 1614.<sup>28</sup> Gray served as a councillor in 1627-8 while still amassing his fortune, for he paid tax as a member of the elite only in 1630. He was elected treasurer in 1630 and 1631, as a bailie in 1632, as a councillor in 1633, as a bailie in 1637 and as an ordinary councillor in both 1638 and 1639. Although he was involved in the wine trade he appears to have made most of his fortune through both money-lending and investing in the grain markets.<sup>29</sup>

David McCall presents a slightly different picture. He was taxed as a member of the elite in 1614, ten years before serving for the first time on the town council.<sup>30</sup> He, perhaps, owed in part his social advancement within the burgh to his marriage in 1607 to Christian Wight, daughter of Hew Wight, a member of the elite. McCall, already a well established merchant, served as a councillor in 1624-5, as treasurer in 1628 and 1629, as a councillor in 1630, as a bailie in 1633, as treasurer in 1634, and as a councillor in 1635. He died sometime between August 1638 and 1639.<sup>31</sup> Having married into a wealthy cloth merchandising family, and as an overseas trader himself, McCall's position on the town council, despite the burdens imposed by being treasurer, would have strengthened his status within burgh society. William Reid's career again reveals the importance and influence of family connections.<sup>32</sup> Reid entered into burgh politics due to the

---

28. For information of Gray, see appendix VII.

29. ECA, DGCR, iii, 1 Nov. 1620; iv, 6 June 1627; RS 1/47, 13 Sept. 1638, RS 1/22, 20 Aug. 1627.

30. For information on McCall, see appendix VII.

31. RS 1/47, 23 Aug. 1638; RMS, ix, 2068.

32. For information on Reid, see appendix VII.

influence of his father-in-law, Patrick Cochrane. Reid married Cochrane's daughter Janet in 1599 and was entered as burgess in 1600 as a pledge of her father. Cochrane had sat on the council before 1600 and seven times from 1600 until his death in 1613, serving as town treasurer in 1604-05.<sup>33</sup> Marriage into this family rather than personal fortune influenced Reid's first election as councillor in 1612-3 and his subsequent elections to the council. Although he was elected bailie in 1625-6, councillor 1626-7 and again bailie in 1629-30, he does not appear as a member of the town elite until the tax roll of 1630. Reid served as councillor in 1630-31, as bailie in 1633-4 and as councillor in 1634-5. Certainly Reid made use of possible business connections with other wealthy merchant offered by service on the town council. In 1629 an action was raised for non payment of freight dues on a cargo of skins and hides exported to Calais from Leith in 1627, against Reid and five other merchants, two of whom had sat with him on at least one council.<sup>34</sup> Entry into the town council was, thus, open to young, ambitious merchants, and was viewed as a forum in which to make lucrative business connections. While personal ability would seem to be important in influencing election on to the council; family ties - whether through marriage or direct blood link to other council members - played their own important role.

---

33. For information on Cochrane see appendix VII.

34. ECA, DGCR, iv, 4 Feb. 1629. Action was brought by John Trotter. Those sued included Andrew Ainslie and George Suttie who sat on the council with Reid between 1625 and 1627. John Kniblo, also sued, was to sit on the town council of 1629-30 with Reid.



There appears to have been a hard core consisting of members of perhaps twenty-five elite families serving virtually consistently on the town council during these years, although not always appearing on the same councils. There was not a system of automatic inheritance of council positions from father to son. It was the usual practice for a son to enter the council only as his father ceased service. James Ainslie, on the council eight times from 1605, serving four times as a bailie, ended his service in 1622, the year in which his son, Andrew, served the first of his eight times on the council.<sup>35</sup> Patrick Cochrane ended a long and distinguished career on the council in the year 1611. That same year his son, James, served for the first time as a councillor, at the start of his service to the town which was to last for the next thirty years.<sup>36</sup> Similarly James Speir ended his service on the council in 1610-11, the same year that his son Alexander was elected for the first of eleven times.<sup>37</sup> The replacement of father by son was not always quite so immediate. John Jackson ended his time as councillor in 1605-6, two years before his son served on the council.<sup>38</sup> Alexander McMath served on Edinburgh town council for the last time in 1607-8 and it was not until 1629 that his son, William, entered town politics.<sup>39</sup> John Trotter sat on the council of 1612-12, and his son, John, did not enter town service until 1633-4.<sup>40</sup>

---

35. See appendix VII.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.



While it is not always possible to prove blood links certain family names occur on the council over the forty years. Gilbert and Robert Acheson, brothers, served eight and six times respectively on the council after 1612, and sat on the councils of 1623-4 and 1631-2 together.<sup>41</sup> John and Robert Fleming, probably brothers, sat on the council at various times after 1623, although together on only the council of 1638-9.<sup>42</sup> David and Gilbert Williamson both sat on the town council although they were of a different generation and their relationship may have been only that of uncle and nephew.<sup>43</sup> Members of the Rae family: Adam and his brother James, James's son and William Rae, probably their cousin, all served on the council at some point from 1603 to 1638, although never on the same council. In addition, three different members of the Inglis family sat on the council during these years; three members of the Morison family, and three members of the Murray family; as well as two Nisbets; two Hamiltons; two Wilkies, two McCalls and two Johnstons.<sup>44</sup> While in the mid-sixteenth century it had been unusual for brothers to sit on the same council,<sup>45</sup> by the seventeenth century there was a noticeable tendency among the elite members on the council for son to follow father, eventually if not immediately, and for the extended family - of cousins, uncles, nephews as well

---

41. Ibid.

42. There is no direct proof of any blood link between these two men. In June 1635 Robert Fleming consented with John Fleming, tutor to Margaret Hamilton's children, to Hamilton's resignation of land in the Grassmarket (RMS, ix, 324).

43. Gilbert named his son David. (Edin. Tests, Janet Johnston 29 Sept. 1625). David died in 1623, the year of Gilbert's first service on the council.

44. See appendix VII.

45. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 15.

as brothers to participate together in burgh politics. Indeed, if marriage ties are considered those on the council are brought into even closer familial contact. This is not, however, to imply that all sons followed their fathers on to the council. Alexander Monteath served on the council of 1628-9. However, his son, Robert, himself an elite member never served on the council.<sup>46</sup> While both Mr. William Little's father and father-in-law sat on the council he did not, preferring to farm his estates to the south of Edinburgh.<sup>47</sup>

As with any wealthy group it was the natural inclination for the Edinburgh elite to attempt to conserve and protect their wealth and political influence through marriage with one another. The best example of this sort of political connection amongst the Edinburgh elite was that of the Morison family. Descended from John Morison, who had sat on the burgh council thirteen times up to his death in 1615, the family was connected by marriage almost exclusively to other members of the elite on the town council. John's son, Harry, who sat on the council in 1615- 6 and 1621- 2, married Christine Dick, sister of William Dick, in June 1606. His sister Lillias married, that same year, Patrick Ellis, who was on the town council eight times from 1615 to 1630. Katherine Morison was married in 1598 to Adam Rae of Pitsindie, a councillor in 1603- 4. Bessie Morison married William Dick, on the council sixteen times from 1611, in 1603, and in 1609 Sarah Morison married James Inglis, another noted council member. Another sister, Janet, was married to Thomas Inglis, councillor five times between 1600 and 1640, although there is no

---

46. Robert was described as Alexander's son NLS Adv. Lib. 80.1.1.

47. See appendix VII and also see NLS Adv. Lib., Morison Papers, 25.2.2.

record of the date of their marriage.

Another wealthy family, that of James Baron, himself a councillor from 1555, united itself by marriage to other notable council families. His daughter, Isabelle, was married first to John Fairlie in 1606, a council member regularly from 1581 until his death in 1620. Two years later she married Nicol Udard, again a prominent town councillor from 1562 until his death in 1633. Another of Baron's daughters, Bessie, was married in 1607 to James McMorran, a council member in 1621-2, and brother to Ninian McMorran. Other examples of this sort of connection include Alexander Dennistoun, a councillor twice and bailie once between 1624 and 1636, was married in April 1627 to Isabelle Dougal. Her father, Robert, had sat on the council five times, twice as bailie, from 1609 until his death in 1622, and had himself been married to a member of the Dick family. Alexander Pierson, who sat almost continuously on the town government from 1591 until his death in 1625, married in 1610 Margaret Mitchell, the widow of Edward Edgar, whose son by this marriage to Edgar, sat on the council seven times from 1625 to 1640.

Robert Fleming, on the council five times between 1632 and 1639, married Agnes Philp in September of 1634. John Kniblo a council member three times, and on the council with Fleming in 1638-9, had married in 1610 Margaret Philp, probably an aunt to Agnes. Lawrence Henderson, elected on to the council in 1638-9, had in 1611 married Bessie Hamilton, sister to Charles Hamilton, himself a council member four times between 1628 and 1638. Henderson, after Bessie's death, married in 1624 Isabelle Charters, probably a relative of Thomas Charters, a council



member seven times between 1622 and 1640.<sup>48</sup> By the late 1630s the members of the elite sitting on the town council with any regularity had reinforced their close-knit, closely related group, whether through marriage or direct blood ties. While it was possible for ambitious, unrelated merchants to be elected on to the town government these family bonds were becoming of paramount importance in determining the eligibility of those serving the burgh.

It must be remembered that those elite merchants serving on the council represented only about twenty-four percent of those considered to be the wealthiest in the burgh. More than two-thirds of Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants showed little interest in town service by serving only once on the council or not at all. It is not easy to determine why a particular merchant was not involved in town politics. Lack of interest in burgh affairs was surely not a factor for amongst its other tasks it was the council which determined trading practices within the town. The pressures of day-to-day business, the sheer bulk of work involved in running a trading establishment in particular when added to the amount of time required to be expended on town meetings must have discouraged many a successful merchant from actively pursuing a role in town affairs. By the seventeenth century the town council itself was meeting at least three times weekly, the bailie courts at least twice a week, the dean of guild court similarly, in addition to which such duties as both custom and building inspection and the general administrative duties of the burgh, required almost full-time attention. Few merchants

---

48. For all information see appendix VII.

attempting to establish a successful business - which despite the growing trend towards specialization rather than diversification of goods and the devolution of personal responsibility to agents and factors, still required the merchant to oversee the daily running of a booth, loading and unloading of cargoes, and personal appearances at custom inspections - could afford the time required to attend all council functions. Only merchants of exceptional talent or from well-established mercantile families could, indeed, devote time to the council. Those not represented directly on the council must surely have made their wishes in the town's affairs felt in a more subtle fashion.

It is probable that those merchants who showed no interest in being directly involved on the council had their influence felt by proxy - influencing the council from behind-the-scenes. The close business or personal relationships which these merchants had with council members must surely have made their interests and opinions known to the ruling elite. Without having the onerous tasks and burdens of office it would have been possible to indicate to business partners sitting on the council views and attitudes about burgh affairs. Robert Jollie never sat on the Edinburgh town council although a substantial merchant. However he did have business connections with merchants who were councillors. In November 1600 Jollie and John Robertson were jointly relieved of a debt of almost 12,000 marks owed from the estates of the earl of Gowrie.<sup>49</sup> Robertson was at that time dean of guild; he had

---

49. APS, iv, 199. This was not Jollie's only business transaction with Robertson. In October 1607 he was paid part of a debt owed to Robertson for wine sold to Isabelle Telfer (SR0, GD 172/2125).

first entered the council in 1573 and was to remain on the council constantly until 1608. Jollie was also involved in 1606 in claims against the lands of Saltoun along with John Byres, James Heriot and William Wilkie.<sup>50</sup> Byres was first admitted on to the council of 1606-7 serving a further sixteen times; Heriot had served as deacon convenor that year; and Wilkie was to serve on the town council three times from 1620. Jollie was further involved with important council members in that in June 1612 he exported cloth along with William Rig, who had been on the council since 1588, was a bailie 1611-2, and served on the council a further five times.<sup>51</sup>

Robert Inglis is another example of a merchant intimately connected with the town council although never appearing on it. His familial connection to the council is apparent in that three members of the Inglis family served upon the town council: James Inglis eight times between 1585 and 1626, John Inglis, twice between 1630 and 1639 and Thomas Inglis six times from 1595 to 1636. Robert, however, never sat on the council being obviously the family's representative in London, for he is taxed in 1637 as '... at London for traid...' and described in 1642 as Robert Inglis in London when granted the lands of Craighcuse.<sup>52</sup> Further business connections with the council members is revealed in a charter of 1634 which granted equally the lands of Tulliallan to Inglis and seven other merchants.<sup>53</sup> These included

---

50. RS 24/7, 12 Sept. 1606.

51. SRO, E71/29/6, 21 June 1612.

52. See appendix VII.

53. RMS, ix, 68.



Thomas Charters, on the council seven times between 1622 and 1640; James Loch, a councillor four times between 1629 and 1635, serving as treasurer in 1634; John Hilston a councillor in 1632-3, and James Nairn a councillor in 1625-6. The other two merchants included, were also from the elite: Patrick Wood who served only on the council of 1638-9, and Thomas Leishman who, like Inglis, did not serve on the council. Although the evidence does not survive it may be assumed that Inglis's position in London enabled him to report events there if not directly to the burgh council then at least to his intimate family and business connections.

However, as in any community, there existed among Edinburgh's elite those with absolutely no direct interest in the town's politics. Certainly these men must have known those on the council, and must themselves have been of sufficient gravitas to sit on the council, yet were never selected. William Salmond was taxed in both 1630 and 1637 as one of Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants yet never served on the council.<sup>54</sup> This was due perhaps to the pressure of his business - he was a notable overseas trader and shipowner - however it is interesting to note that Salmond had few business dealings with those men of the elite and had no family connections with them whatsoever. Indeed, the Salmond family was not a long established Edinburgh mercantile family - William being the first member entered as a burghess as late as 1604, and that by right of his wife, daughter of an Edinburgh burghess. Similarly, Andrew Oswald, taxed as an elite

---

54. See appendix VII.

member in 1637, never served on the council and seemed to have few business or familial connections with those men involved in burgh politics.<sup>55</sup> He, too, was entered burgess in 1626 by right of his wife and was the first member of the Oswald family so honoured. Certainly, upon his wife's death in 1639 the family had no substantial business transactions outstanding with other members of elite families, and by Oswald's death ten years later had none at all.<sup>56</sup> It may, perhaps, be concluded from this that by the early seventeenth century the government of the burgh had been gripped firmly by an oligarchy of connected families. Not all members of these families served on the council but those who did were usually intimately connected with each other. While it was not totally closed, it was becoming a circle increasingly difficult for men — even those of proven ability and business acumen — who had neither business nor family connections to enter.

Service to the town by members of the elite was not limited exclusively to membership on the town council. While this body was certainly the most important arm of social control within the city, the elite also extended their interests beyond the burgh by serving in such offices as water bailie and bailies of Leith. In addition, elite members served Edinburgh as town constables, as organizers of the town militia, on various charitable councils, and on both the kirk session and kirk council. Through these additional offices, some of which had only recently come into being, the elite effectively controlled most of the administrative offices of the burgh. It is not easy to determine the exact duties of all

---

55. Ibid.

56. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Denholme, 17 Oct. 1639; Edin. Tests, 12 Apr. 1650.

of the numerous committees which existed during these years and, indeed, to examine the precise influence which these bodies had not only upon the burgh but upon Leith. However, the fact that so many of these bodies were controlled by the wealthiest merchants of the burgh must show that social control and public welfare were regarded strictly as the prerogative of the burgh elite.

Edinburgh's relationship with Leith had always been a matter of grave concern to those in power on the town council.<sup>57</sup> The lack of legal control over what the merchants of the burgh regarded as their port had long been a knotty problem. The council minutes reflect the animosity felt towards the port with constant reiteration of statutes against Leith traders and burgesses, attempting to bring them under direct control of Edinburgh.<sup>58</sup> Although the burgh had had virtual control over Leith since 1565, if not before, their superiority was not legally ratified until James VI's 'Golden Charter' of 1603, which confirmed these rights over Leith. This was followed by the purchase in 1604 of the reversion of the superiority of Leith from Lady Cassillis and Lord Thirlestane, confirmed by Thirlestane in 1614 upon attaining his majority, and further ratified in 1636 by a charter of Charles I.<sup>59</sup> Members of the elite were intimately involved in both the negotiations over this purchase and in lending money towards it. Of the 14,000 merks which the council borrowed to pay Lord

---

57. M. Wood, Edinburgh, 1329-1929 (Edinburgh, 1929), 324-5; Edin. Recs., 1604-26, xix-xxii. Also see J.C. Irons, Leith and its Antiquities, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1898) for a description of the port's relationship with Edinburgh.

58. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 35, 183, 205, 195; 1626-41, 42, 143.

59. Edinburgh was granted superiority of Leith in 1565 by Henry and Mary. For dealings with Lady Cassillis see Edin. Recs., 1604-25, 3, 4, 7, 122. Also see Irons, Leith and its Antiquities, ii, 90-1; ECA, MSS ETCR, xi, 17, 25 July 1604, 3 Aug. 1604.



Thirlestane, Henry Nisbet lent 4,000 marks, George Foulis 3,400 marks, Mr. William Little 2,000 marks and Richard Dobie 2,000 marks.<sup>60</sup> The attempts by the council to control Leith is also reflected in the gradual dominance which members of the elite gained over Leith's governing bodies.

Leith was ruled by three elected officials - a water bailie, and two ordinary bailies. It would appear that these men were virtually chosen by the Edinburgh council, for the record of their selection fell either at the same time as that of Edinburgh town council or shortly thereafter. As with the Edinburgh magistrates it is extremely doubtful that these men were elected by democratic processes; certainly lists for the post of water bailie or bailie of Leith do not exist. The duties of each of the offices is also difficult to determine. The water bailie served in a role somewhat analogous to that of dean of guild. He was in charge of the court, dealing not only with neighbourhood disputes, but also with such local concerns as the running of mills.<sup>61</sup> It was usual for the water bailie to sit also as one of the ordinary bailies, further reducing Edinburgh council's worry of controlling Leith through suitable candidates.<sup>62</sup>

Twenty-nine of the wealthiest merchants of Edinburgh sat in positions of power in Leith between 1600 and 1638.<sup>63</sup> Although it has been stated that these men were former members of Edinburgh

---

60. Ibid., xi, 28 Dec. 1604, 11 Jan. 1605.

61. Edin. Recs., 1589-1603, 263-4; 1604-26, 24. Disputes with the shipping trade in the port were brought before the Dean of Guild Court in Edinburgh.

62. Indeed the post of water bailie was held by one family - the Formans - from the late 16th century until 1619. See Wood, Edinburgh 1320-1920, 325-6.

63. See table 3.

TABLE 3. MEMBERS OF ELITE SERVING AS WATER BAILIE  
OR AS BAILIES OF LEITH

DATE	WATER BAILIE	BAILIE OF LEITH
1600-01		
1601-02		
1602-03		
1603-04		
1604-05		
1605-06		Joseph Marjoribanks
1606-07		
1607-08	Joseph Marjoribanks	Joseph Marjoribanks
1608-09	William Rig	William Rig Mungo McCall
1609-10		James Ainslie
1610-11		James Inglis
1611-12		James Heriot
1612-13		
1613-14		William Speir
1614-15		
1615-16		Robert Dougal
1616-17		James Cochran
1617-18		Andrew Simpson
1618-19	Nicol Udard <sup>1</sup>	Nicol Udard Peter Blackburn
1619-20	John Fairlie	John Fairlie Robert Halyburton
1620-21	Mungo McCall	Mungo McCall Patrick Ellis
1621-22	Mungo McCall	Mungo McCall Alexander Heriot
1622-23	Mungo McCall	Mungo McCall Andrew Purves
1623-24		Archibald Tod
1624-25		Thomas Charters
1625-26	James Cochran	James Cochran Gilbert Williamson
1626-27	NO RECORD	OF ELECTION
1627-28	NO RECORD	OF ELECTION
1628-29	Patrick Ellis	Patrick Ellis James Murray
1629-30	Thomas Charters	Thomas Charters William Wilkie
1630-31	Gilbert Williamson	Gilbert Williamson John Inglis
1631-32	NO RECORD	OF ELECTION
1632-33		Charles Hamilton
1633-34	Gilbert Williamson	Gilbert Williamson David Jenkin
1634-35	NO RECORD	OF ELECTION
1635-36	George Baillie	George Baillie John Fleming
1636-37		John Trotter
1637-38	William Reid	William Reid
1638-39	Charles Hamilton	Charles Hamilton
1639-40	NO RECORD	OF ELECTION

1. Only after death of James Forman in June 1619.

Source: Edin. Recs., 1589-1641.

town council,<sup>64</sup> it must not be implied that these positions in Leith were filled by the decrepit - pushed out to graze in easy pasture. The men serving in Leith usually did so within the first five years of their initial service on Edinburgh town council, and except in five cases served Edinburgh again after their stint in Leith.<sup>65</sup> Service as a bailie of Leith must have been regarded by Edinburgh council as another proving ground of the abilities of those men to be considered for important Edinburgh offices, for it is doubtful that the posts in Leith were viewed with much enthusiasm. The position as bailie of Leith paid a stipend of a mere £50 per annum,<sup>66</sup> and few of the elite served in Leith more than twice surely indicating a reluctance to be involved there. The only exceptions to this were Mungo McCall who served four times as bailie between 1608-9 and 1620-23, as well as three times as water bailie between 1625-6, 1630-31, 1633-4, and twice as water bailie from 1630-31 and 1633-4.<sup>67</sup> The clarification of Edinburgh's legal hold over Leith in 1603 must have stimulated the elite's interest in Leith, however, for before that date no member of the elite was involved in Leith government and thereafter, save for one year, at least one member of the Edinburgh elite was represented in one of the Leith offices. From 1618 it was the natural occurrence if not for all positions to be held by members of the elite, then at least for the more important figure of water bailie to be a merchant drawn from the elite.

---

64. Wood, Edinburgh 1329-1929, 326.

65. Those who did not serve on Edinburgh's council after serving in Leith were Patrick Ellis, John Inglis, David Jenkin, George Baillie and William Reid.

66. Edin. Recs, 1004-26, 88.

67. See table 3.



The duties of the Edinburgh elite extended beyond the limits of mere burgh politics into national affairs through their service as commissioners to both the Convention of Royal Burghs and as Edinburgh's representatives to parliament. It was only natural that the wealthiest merchants of the burgh were chosen to represent it on these bodies - for, in the main, those selected to both bodies were chosen from the ranks of current town councillors. Nevertheless this still meant that Edinburgh's wealthiest group dominated the policy-making body for trade and industry in Scotland - the Convention of Royal Burghs for the representative from Edinburgh was invariably chosen as convener of the body, and was well to the fore in Scotland's parliaments. Between January 1600 and June 1638 the Convention of Royal Burghs met 133 times - forty-one times as a general convention and ninety-two times as a particular convention - a smaller body to discuss a chosen subject or problem.<sup>68</sup> Edinburgh since the decret and arbitral of 1583 had been usually represented on the Convention by two men - a merchant and a craftsman, - although in January 1600 three representatives were selected, in July 1601 four, in August 1601 three and in July 1622 only a merchant was chosen.<sup>69</sup> The wealthiest merchants of the burgh represented it on twenty-five general conventions and sixty-one particular conventions - in total eighty-six times out of a possible 133. The craft representatives, taxed as the burgh elite, were also representatives of the burgh at fourteen general and twenty-one

---

68. RCRB, ii, iii. The records are missing after 1631 and this deficiency was supplied by lists of elections to the conventions in Edin. Recs, 1626-41.

69. RCRB, ii, 66, 70, 115; iii, 136.

particular conventions. Admittedly, except for two occasions, all of the elite chosen were also on the town council of that year whether as bailie, dean of guild, or in one case as provost. For all that well over half of the conventions were attended by members of the burgh aristocracy only sixteen different merchants and five elite craftsmen represented Edinburgh.

Amongst those selected to attend the Convention of Royal Burghs were John Sinclair who attended twenty-one different conventions, five from July 1629 to July 1630, four from January to October 1633 and eleven from October 1634 to November 1637. Alexander Pierson served seventeen times; three times from July 1606 to July 1607, eleven times from July 1608 to March 1612, twice from December 1613 to January 1614 and once in November 1617. John Byres attended fourteen times, mainly as dean of guild from 1623 to 1625. The other merchants involved in the conventions attended fewer times: William Dick six times, James Nisbet and Alexander Clerk five times, John Robertson four times, Richard Dobie, William Mauld and Henry Nisbet three times; Andrew Ainslie and William Gray twice and Ninian McMorran, William Rig, Mungo McCall and William Reid only once. Of the five craft representatives to the conventions, George Foulis, a goldsmith, dominated serving twenty-eight times while the others combined served only eight times.<sup>70</sup>

It is interesting to note that it was basically these very men who provided the burgh's representation at the few parliaments summoned between 1600 and 1638. Only twelve parliaments were summoned from November 1600 to June 1633 although the parliament

---

70. See RCRB, iii and Edin. Recs, 1626-41.

of September 1628 never actually met.<sup>71</sup> There were, however, periodic conventions, smaller and less formal meetings which were usually summoned at short notice to discuss a particular problem without entailing the formal summoning of a parliament.<sup>72</sup> Seven conventions were summoned between 1601 and 1630 although a sedarunt of each does not always exist. The burgh elite were represented at parliament or the conventions by seven members of the merchant elite, and two elite craftsmen all of whom had also been at some point the burgh's representative at the Convention of Royal Burghs. The candidates selected were always sitting town councillors, either bailie, dean of guild or an ordinary councillor. John Robertson represented Edinburgh at the parliament of January 1606 and again in March 1607. At the time he was also serving as Edinburgh's dean of guild.<sup>73</sup> Although he had served as commissioner to the Convention of Royal Burghs he did not do so concurrently with his service in parliament. Richard Dobie who had also served on the Convention of Royal Burgh meetings in 1600 and 1601, represented Edinburgh at a Convention in July 1608.<sup>74</sup> Alexander Pierson sat both at a convention of the Estates in Edinburgh on 24 June 1609 and some ten days earlier had represented Edinburgh at the Convention of Royal Burghs general meeting.<sup>75</sup> James Nisbet represented Edinburgh at the parliament

---

71. APS, iv, v.

72. A convention could be summoned at forty days notice. See R.K. Hannay, 'On 'Parliament' and 'General Council', ' SHR, xviii (1921), 157-81; R.S. Rait, 'Parliamentary Representation in Scotland', SHR, xii (1925), 115-35, 247-71; Rait The Parliaments of Scotland (Glasgow, 1924).

73. APS, iv, 276, 279, Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 15, 23.

74. RCRB, ii, 115, 122; APS, iv, 402.

75. Ibid., iv, 411, RCRB, iii, 33.



of October 1612 and again in March 1617.<sup>76</sup> In both October 1612 and March 1617 he had also represented the burgh at a particular convention of the Convention of Royal Burghs.<sup>77</sup> Alexander Clerk sat at the parliament in June 1621 and represented the burgh at a Convention of Royal Burghs meeting in July 1621.<sup>78</sup> John Sinclair represented Edinburgh at parliament in June 1633 and was at the same time also a Convention of Royal Burghs commissioner.<sup>79</sup> The craftsmen, George Foulis and Gilbert Kirkwood, goldsmiths, served at both parliament and the Convention of Royal Burghs at the same time.<sup>80</sup> While not invariable, it would seem that the burgh, perhaps to lessen the expenses caused by its representatives, tended to send the same men to both of these institutions. Due perhaps to their position on the town council as well as to their knowledge and expertise as wealthy businessmen an inner core of the elite served the burgh on both bodies.

The wealthiest merchants extended their influence and means of social control within the burgh through more direct means with the formation of a band of 'town constables' in 1611. Prior to that date it had been considered the responsibility of all neighbours to keep watch and ward, assisting the bailies as required, although money was eventually collected to hire a watch for this purpose. The act of 1611 required the town council to

---

76. APS, iv, 465, 523.

77. RCRB, ii, 377; iii, 33.

78. APS, iv, 591, RCRB, iii, 123.

79. APS, v, 9, Edin. Recs, 1626-41, 117, 121, 128, 132.

80. APS, iv, 263, 277.

elect twenty-four constables, six from each quarter, with equal representation from merchants and craftsmen, for a period of six months; by 1615 the elections occurred only once a year.<sup>81</sup> By 1625 the paid watch was dismissed and the town relied for its policing on a mixture of neighbourhood responsibility and the constables.<sup>82</sup> The duties of the elected constables were onerous. They were to apprehend and arrest criminals and vagabonds, idle persons, murderers, beggars, swearers and blasphemers, to quell disturbances, search out and imprison papists, as well as to discover and fine those guilty of such offences against hygiene as placing middens in the street.<sup>83</sup> In addition the constables were to appear before the town council on the last Saturday of each month to give a report of themselves and each constable in rotation was to appear in the Lower Tolbooth for night duty.<sup>84</sup> In view of these duties and the time which they required it is surprising that members of the burgh elite did not contrive to avoid the position. Forty-six of them did serve as constables between 1611 and 1638, holding about twenty-three percent of all positions as constables. It must have been felt that if the elite as a group were concerned with maintaining their power and political dominance within the burgh it was natural and in their best interests to have a representative on this body. From 1611 to 1634 at least one of the wealthiest members of Edinburgh served as town constable each year.<sup>85</sup> To be more precise, one man who either was already or was to be taxed as

---

81. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, pp. xxv, xxvii, 77. There exists a record of only one election in 1613.

82. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 282.

83. Ibid., 1604-26, 78.

84. Ibid., 1604-26, pp. xxxviii, 78,

85. See table 4.

a member of the elite served for on many occasions the merchant elected constable was not at that time taxed in the top bracket but was to be in later stent rolls. This fact could explain both the seeming drop in elite interest in the role of constable after the elections of 1620 - by 1636 no elite members were constables - and the very fact that up to 1620 so many of those considered to be the wealthiest men served as constables. Perhaps the role of town policeman was viewed as a proving ground, as yet another stepping stone to further involvement in town politics which could be abandoned when a certain level of prosperity and influence was achieved.

Members of the elite did, however, serve as town constable after having been taxed as an elite member. Patrick Whitelaw was elected as one of the constables for the south-west quarter in September 1611. Not only had he been taxed in the top bracket in the stent of 1605 but also served as a councillor on the town council of 1611-2. Similarly, Robert Dougal also elected as a constable in 1611, was an elite member in the stent of 1605 and was a councillor in 1609-10. Of the seven merchants considered to be among the elite who were elected as constables in November 1615 all but one were taxed as elite members in the stent of 1614, two had served on the town council before 1615, and four were to serve as councillors afterwards.<sup>86</sup> Of the seven different members of the elite who served as constables after 1630 five had been taxed as amongst the

---

86. These men elected were John Jackson, David McCall, James Loch, James Nisbet, Andrew Purves and James Nicol all amongst the elite in 1614. Only James Arnot, younger, was not stented as amongst the elite until 1637.



TABLE 4. NUMBERS OF ELITE SERVING AS CONSTABLES 1611-38

12 merchants were selected  
for each election.

DATE OF ELECTION				NUMBERS
7 Sept. 1611				4
27 March 1612				6
9 Oct. 1612				4
NO	RECORD	OF	ELECTION	Mar. 1613
29 Oct. 1613				6
1 June 1614				3
28 Dec. 1614				5
8 Nov. 1615				7
8 Nov. 1616				3
15 Oct. 1617				4
21 Oct. 1618				6
15 Oct. 1619				3
11 Oct. 1620				4
10 Oct. 1621				2
1 Nov. 1622				1
28 Nov. 1623				1
20 Oct. 1624				3
12 Oct. 1625				1
13 Oct. 1626				2
5 Oct. 1627				2
8 Oct. 1628				1
14 Oct. 1629				2
20 Oct. 1630				1
21 Oct. 1631				3
19 Oct. 1632				2
6 Nov. 1633				3
8 Oct. 1634				2
NO	RECORD	OF	ELECTION	1635
21 Oct. 1636				0
26 Oct. 1637				0
19 Oct. 1638				0

Source: ECA, MSS, ETCR, xii-xv.

wealthiest men in Edinburgh from at least the roll of 1630. Yet almost sixty percent of the elite merchants who served as constables did so prior to entering the taxable elite. Of the forty-six merchants serving as constables twenty-nine served as constables before being taxed as members of the elite. Thomas Deans served as constable for the south-west quarter in 1621 and 1631, and was not a member of the elite until the roll in 1637. Robert Glen served as constable twice before being taxed as a member of the burgh elite. Both these men never served as town council members. Indeed, as many as twenty of the forty-six elite merchants who served as constables played no part on the town council. It must therefore be concluded that while the Edinburgh elite were interested in the functions of the town's constabulary, they in no way dominated the force. It was a position generally filled by those merchants who at the time were not quite wealthy enough to be taxed as the burgh elite. However, the creation of an organized constabulary which had amongst its officers men ranging in status from ordinary burghesses to the town's mercantile aristocracy tightened the grip of the oligarchy over the populace without them having to concede any form of political power to a wider range of people.

The decision by King Charles to involve his armies in aiding the Huguenots in La Rochelle in 1625 necessitated a major re-thinking of Edinburgh's defence policies, which inevitably involved the burgh's elite. Defence of the burgh from foreign invasion had not been a factor of town policy since the 1570s so that by early 1626 the council was forced to record that '... if anye foraine invasioun scould happin this burgh scould be

fund unprovydit with sufficient airmour for resisting of such lyik invasioun.<sup>87</sup> Not only were the burgh inhabitants set to arm themselves, but an emergency meeting was called for 8 February 1626 to discuss the situation. This meeting involved not only the entire town council of that year, but also an additional nineteen merchants and nine craftsmen described as being the honest and worthiest inhabitants of the burgh.<sup>88</sup> The town council for 1625-6 involved fourteen of the burgh elite, and a further seventeen of the additional nineteen merchants summoned were also among the wealthiest members of the elite, as were three of the additional nine craftsmen. Of the sixty-one burgesses consulted about the best means of defending Edinburgh from foreign attack thirty-four were the town's elite. The decision made by these men was to divide the burgh into eight companies, two for each quarter, each company comprising in total at least two hundred men, to be properly trained in all manner of military exercises.<sup>89</sup> Obviously concerned to divide responsibility equally between merchants and craftsmen, a week later the council issued orders that each of these eight companies were to be commanded by both a merchant and a craftsman, aided by an ensign bearer, four to be merchants and four craftsmen. Each company was also to have four sergeants, chosen from either merchant or craft representatives.<sup>90</sup> The council made quite clear that the men chosen were in their judgement the fittest men to defend the burgh, and that the choice did not reflect the men's status within

---

87. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 293.

88. Ibid., 1604-26, 297; ECA, MSS, ETCR, viii, 8 Feb. 1626.

89. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 297.

90. Ibid., 1604-26, 298. Wood states that a lieutenant was also elected; however, there is no record of any such person being elected. See ibid., 1604-26, p. xxxix.



the town as either merchant or craftsman.<sup>91</sup>

Of the forty-eight men chosen by the council to be placed in charge of the companies only thirteen were members of the burgh elite.<sup>92</sup> While this may appear to be a negligible number it is surprising that any wealthy merchant would have been willing to devote time to soldiering, particularly when it involved practising musketry once a week, use of the pick once a week, and a weekly field exercise, as well as being on call whenever the council required armed service.<sup>93</sup> The burgh elite were represented by the commanders of both of the north-west companies, the commander of the first south-east and first south-west companies, the ensign bearers of the first north-west, first north-east, first south-west and second south-east companies, and by a single sergeant in both the second north west and first north-east companies as well as two sergeants of the first south-west companies. Only the second south-west company had no member of the town elite on its commanding body. It must be stated that none of the thirteen elite merchants chosen for command in 1626 was taxed as a member of the elite prior to 1630. Six of them were to serve on the town council between 1600-38. Two of them, Thomas Charters and David McCall, had served on the town council prior to 1626, Charters in 1622 and McCall in 1624. Three, John Smith, James Murray and John Rhind were to serve on the town council

---

91. Ibid., 1604-26, 303.

92. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 24 Feb. 1626 for a list of the men selected.

93. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 300-02.

of 1626-7 and Stephen Boyd was to serve on the council of 1627-8.<sup>94</sup> Three also served as constables before 1626, David McCall in 1615 and 1619, John Shaw in 1618, Thomas Deans in 1621, and John Edgar was to serve as a constable in 1627. Further to the elite's service as military commanders a council of war, chosen in March 1626, comprised of six men, including three members of the town's elite.<sup>95</sup> The committee chosen in October 1627 to consult about the possibility of building a fort in Leith and of training the Leith inhabitants had three members of the elite on it.<sup>96</sup> This committee consulted with the town council and twenty-two neighbours a month later on this question. Of these twenty-two men considered to be both of sufficient stature and qualified to deal with Leith's fortification eighteen were elite merchants.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, an order of December 1638 requiring that the neighbours be trained in military discipline for the defence of the country and of the king, was supervised by a council of nineteen: fourteen merchants and five craftsmen. Of these men thirteen of the merchants were members of the elite as was one of the craftsmen.<sup>98</sup> If the

---

94. It would appear that when elected to the town council it was usual to resign from the companies. On 19 Oct. 1627 Thomas Charters and Thomas Moffet resigned as company commanders after having been elected to the town council that year (ECA, MSS, ETCR xiv, 19 Oct. 1627; Edin. Recs, 1626-41, p. xxxvii).

95. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 302.

96. Ibid., 1626-41, 36.

97. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 13 Nov. 1627. These men were Joseph Marjoribanks, Mungo McCall, Nicol Udard, Andrew Simpson, Peter Somerville, James Arnot, John Trotter, William Wilkie, Robert Halyburton, David McCall, John Spence, James Nairn, John Smith, John Rhind, Alexander Carmistoun, John Fleming, John Fairholm and Alexander Monteath.

98. Ibid., xv, 29 Dec. 1638.

majority of the burgh's richest men did not, then, actually soldier in defence of the burgh; it was to them that the burgh turned as overseers of its defence.

It has always been assumed that care was taken to ensure that the burgh's wealthiest merchants policed the spiritual welfare of the town by serving on the kirk sessions and kirk council. For the period 1600-1638 the surviving records of the town's church bodies are fragmentary. Only the records of the leets and election of December 1625 for the kirk session of the four quarters; the minute book of the kirk session of the north-east parish, or Trinity College Church, recording the leets and elections of elders and deacons from 1626 to 1638; a partial list of the elders and deacons of all four quarters for 1637; and the record of the elections to the kirk council from 1605 to 1640, interspersed both throughout the town council minutes and in a volume of minutes of the kirk council from 1608 to 1622, still exist.<sup>99</sup> From the rather patchy evidence which these sources provide it is by no means clear that the burgh's elite were markedly involved on the various kirk sessions by serving either as elders or deacons. While wealthy, those serving on the kirk sessions would appear to have been of a somewhat less exalted status than the burgh elite.

The evidence of the elections to the kirk sessions of the late sixteenth century are equally sparse, but prove much the same point. It has been shown that as early as 1574 the wealthiest men of the burgh, usually also those who had served on the town council, dominated the kirk sessions.<sup>100</sup> There is no suggestion

---

99. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 19, 20, 26 Dec. 1625; SRD, CH2/141/1; ECA, MSS, ETCR, xv, 13 Oct. 1638; *ibid.*, xi-xv and ECA, Kirk Council Minutes, vol. i, covering 5 Nov. 1608 to 15 March 1622.

100. Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation, 39-40.



that the kirk sessions were, at this time, merely an extension of the town council. The election of 1584 was most unusual. That year the town council dominated the election - imposing their own candidates without allowing for the usual process of leeting.<sup>101</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that such overt interference of the choice of the candidates for elders and deacons, or the actual election, by the town council continued beyond that year. However, by 1625 there can be little doubt that the choice of the candidates to be placed on the leet had devolved upon the town council. Certainly those involved in the radical opposition to the religious policies of the crown in the 1610s and 1620s complained that the elections were rigged by the council to support candidates who were subservient to the conciliatory policies of the town council.<sup>102</sup> By 1625 the selection of the leets of elders and deacons - a list of twelve candidates for each post was submitted to the kirk sessions of each of the four parishes, from which six were chosen for each post - was little more than the provost, bailies and town council working with the old elders and deacons to choose suitable candidates.<sup>103</sup> With such control over the procedure it would seem only natural that the sessions would be dominated by the wealthiest men of the burgh, mirroring the power which the oligarchy had over the town council. However, what the lists do reveal is that the elite were either excluded from serving on

---

101. Ibid., 41. This interference was in order to purge a radical faction connected with the Ruthven lords.

102. Makey, The Church of the Covenant, 156-8; Calderwood, History, vii, 454. See below, pp. 369, 372.

103. Makey, The Church of the Covenant, 157.

the kirk sessions, were not interested in the post, or made absolutely sure of their control of the offices by selecting men they viewed as best suited to the post, obviating the need to serve on the kirk sessions themselves. It is, probably, the latter idea which is closest to the truth of the matter.

The election of the elders and deacons in 1625 shows that by this time these posts were regarded as a somewhat junior position.<sup>104</sup> Of the twelve elders leeted for each of the four parishes, four members of the elite were selected as potential elders for the north-east parish, of whom two were elected. Eight elite members were leeted for the north-west, of whom four were selected. Three of the six elite members leeted for the south-west were elected, and two of the three elite members chosen from the south-west parish were elected. The elite members held only eleven out of twenty-four positions as elders. The position of deacon was regarded with even less favour, for of the twenty-four deacons to be chosen only two of the deacons of the south-west were elite members. Indeed, only six of the elite were even leeted for any of the positions as deacon. The election, although supervised by the town council, was not simply a question of the council appointing itself, as no member of the town council of 1625-6 sat as either

---

104. See table 5a. The role played by the elders was, in the main, that of supervising the moral and spiritual behaviour of the congregation. The deacons were the financial arm. They were in charge of collecting poor relief at the door of the church.

TABLE 5A. ELDERS AND DEACONS

Numbers of Elite Leeted and Elected as Elders and  
Deacons 1625.

12 leeted.

6 elected.

	ELDERS		DEACONS	
	Leeted	Elected	Leeted	Elected
NE	4	2	1	0
NW	8	4	2	0
SE	6	3	1	0
SW	3	2	2	2

Source: ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 19, 20, 26 Dec. 1625

TABLE 5B. NORTH-EAST KIRK SESSION (TRINITY CHURCH)

Numbers of Elite Leeted or Elected as Elders and Deacons

12 leeted.

6 elected.

	ELDERS		DEACONS	
	Leeted	Elected	Leeted	Elected
1626	4	2	3	3
1627	4	3	2	0
1628	4	3	2	1
1629	5	2	3	2
1630	5	1	2	2
1631	7	3	2	1
1632	5	4	0	0
1633	3	1	1	1
1634	4	1	1	1
1635	6	4	0	0
1636	3	1	0	0
1637	4	1	0	0
1638	1	1	0	0

Source: SRO, CH2/141/2 - Trinity Church Records.

TABLE 5C. NUMBERS OF ELITE SERVING AS ELDERS AND  
DEACONS, 1637 - INCOMPLETE LIST

	ELDERS	DEACONS
NE	1	0
NW	3	1
SE	2	1
SW	0	0

NE: only 4 elders listed, only 5 deacons listed.

NW: only 4 elders listed, only 5 deacons listed.

SE: only 5 elders listed, only 4 deacons listed.

SW: only 5 elders listed, only 5 deacons listed.

Source: ECA, MSS, ETCR, xv, 13 Oct. 1638.



elder or deacon.<sup>105</sup> Only five of the elite members chosen as elders had held posts on the town council prior to 1625, and a further five of those lested, though not elected, had served on the council.<sup>106</sup> Of the two deacons only one would ever reach the council, and that not until the election of 1634.<sup>107</sup> It must also be noted that of the twenty-seven men considered to be of the elite lested in 1625 to serve as either elders or deacons, only seven were taxed in the top bracket before 1625, the majority only being taxed as the elite in the 1630 or 1637 stent rolls. David Mitchell, lested as elder for the north-west parish, although not elected, was taxed in 1605, 1614, 1630 and 1637 as a member of the elite; as was Peter Somerville, who was actually elected elder for the same parish and thus, the only true elite member on the kirk session. David McCall, Alexander Brown, Thomas Lyndsay, Andrew Simpson and James McMath, taxed as wealthy men from the stent of 1614, were all lested as elders for the various parishes although not ultimately elected. The incomplete list of previous elders and deacons present at the 1625 election reveals also that few of the elite were involved in the kirk session the year before. Five elite members were mentioned as elders in 1624, and two served as

---

105. It was the accepted practice that no elder or deacon was a sitting town councillor. Positions on the kirk session were resigned if an elder or deacon was elected to the town council. Makey, Church of the Covenant, 159.

106. These were Robert Halyburton, Peter Somerville, John Spence, Alexander Heriot and Thomas Charters who were on the town council before 1625. Robert Acheson, David McCall, Andrew Simpson, David Mitchell and Peter Blackburn were lested but not elected and had served on the council before 1625.

107. This was James Aleson, who was on the town council of 1634-5.

deacons. Of these seven, however, five: John Sinclair, John Trotter, Gilbert Acheson, James Loch and William Wilkie; all paid tax as elite members in the 1614 stent roll. Service on the kirk session by members of the burgh elite, while not totally unknown, was a relatively uncommon affair. It was more normal for those serving as elders or deacons to be ambitious men, still climbing up the rungs of the social hierarchy. The 1625 lists do indeed reveal that '... the elders of 1625 can reasonably be regarded as junior members of the burgh oligarchy'.<sup>108</sup> Perhaps this control reflected the growing tensions within the burgh, the dissatisfaction felt by some of the burgh inhabitants over the controversial Five Articles of Perth and the troubles caused by the new church services between 1619 and 1624, and it fell to the junior members of the elite to prove their mettle by controlling the various congregations.<sup>109</sup>

The only extant kirk session minutes, those for the north-east parish, also reflect this fact. In any one year between 1626 and 1638 at the most seven members of the elite were leeted as elders, and at most only four actually served. The position of deacon was, as might be expected, filled by even fewer elite members, three at the most in 1626 and none at all after 1635. Only twenty-nine different members of the burgh's elite were ever leeted for a post either as elder or deacon of the north-east parish, and of this number only seven were never elected to the office. The majority of those either leeted or elected were chosen as junior members of the oligarchy, albeit very able. Only ten merchants were leeted

---

108. Makey, The Church of the Covenant, 159.

109. For an explanation of the troubles caused in 1619 and 1624 see below pp. 370-79.

for a Trinity Church position for the first time after having been taxed as a member of the elite, and of these only three were not elected.<sup>110</sup> Most well established merchants were not particularly interested in serving on the kirk session for only George Wauchope and Robert Halyburton elder served more than once on the session. Nineteen of the merchants considered to be the wealthiest served on the kirk session before entering the elite status in the tax rolls, although of these men eight were elected again after being taxed as the elite. Merchants such as Alexander Dennistoun, elected three times as elder and lested a further three times, Patrick Hepburn, similarly elected three times and lested a further time, or Gilbert Williamson, elected three times as elder provided the nucleus around which the elite consolidated their interest on the Trinity Church kirk session. However, the normal practice would appear to have been that those who served as either elders or deacons did so before entering the upper tax bracket and then not again. While the elite as a group did not dominate the kirk session it had served an apprenticeship on it, was aware of its functions and kept a watchful eye on its actions.

The partial list of elders and deacons of the parishes of 1637 again reflects the tendency for the richest men in the burgh not to participate in church government - even in the hot-house atmosphere following the riot in St. Giles of July 1637. The list states the elders and deacons giving their consent before the town council to the election of commissioners to be sent by the

---

110. SRO, CH2/141/1. See also table 5b.



burgh to the General Assembly to be held at Glasgow in December 1638.<sup>111</sup> The list is incomplete, only eighteen elders out of twenty-four are recorded and only nineteen of the twenty-four deacons are listed.<sup>112</sup> The town's wealthiest men were involved in only three of the parishes: David Murray and Thomas Moodie were elders for the north-west, Alexander Dennistoun elder in the north-east, and Lawrence Henderson and John Inglis older for the south-east. All these men had paid only in the top bracket in the stent of 1637, and only Murray, Dennistoun and Inglis had served on the town council although Henderson was to sit on the council of 1638-9, and Moodie on that of 1639-40. Similarly the two deacons, John McMorran in the north-west and William Dick, younger in the south-east, had only been taxed as elite in the roll of 1637 and had never served on the town council. Both were, however, scions of important Edinburgh families. Obviously, the kirk sessions of Edinburgh were not merely a meeting ground for the burgh's wealthiest men. If any attempt was made by the elite to control the church and through it the town's morals, it was not done by packing the kirk sessions. Service on the session while surely in itself regarded as a worthwhile pursuit, was the prerogative of lesser men. The elite could afford to allow others - lawyers or smaller merchants - their say on the kirk session for it would appear that Edinburgh's most influential group had their hands firmly in control of a body

---

111. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xv, 13 Oct. 1638. If all parishes elected their elders at the same time these men would have been chosen on 28 Dec. 1637 when the north-east parish elected their kirk session (SR0, CH2/141/1). See table 5c.

112. Makey, The Church of the Covenant, 160. The statement that the list mentions 21 of the elders is incorrect.

which to all intents and purposes controlled the church's purse-strings - the kirk council.

Both the origins and functions of the kirk council appear to be somewhat obscure, and there has never been an analysis of its role in Edinburgh. As an entity called the kirk council there is no record of its existence before 1605 or anywhere a description of its actual duties. From the surviving two volumes of its minutes, dealing with 1608 to 1622 and 1625 to 1657, the kirk council would appear to have been primarily a financial committee.<sup>113</sup> It dealt with the collection of the annual rents and teinds due to the church, with the valuation of the church lands and tacks in Currie, Biggar, Wemyss, Soutra and Livingston, as well as the rentals of lands on the north part of the Forth pertaining to the Edinburgh church and with the collection of annual rents due to the church from legacies both within and without the burgh.<sup>114</sup> The committee supervised then the collection of the greater part of Edinburgh church income - excepting only fines from the kirk session collections for poor relief in church and direct legacies to the various kirk sessions by individuals.<sup>115</sup> It has been possible to discover that the kirk council developed out of the appointment by the town council in June 1594 of a commission or council of kirk rents which was to collect the annuals due to the church, give tack of teinds and report its findings to the town council.<sup>116</sup> The six men appointed,

---

113. ECA, Kirk Council Minutes, 2 vols.

114. Ibid., vol. i.

115. It is possible that the kirk council took over the major duties which the kirk session treasurer of the late sixteenth century had performed. See ECA, Kirk Treasurers Accounts, vol. i.

116. Edin. Recs., 1589-1603, 114.

three of whom were also town councillors that year, were to meet every Friday at two in the afternoon in the lower toll booth.<sup>117</sup> The kirk council minutes of 1608 state that it met every Friday at two in the afternoon, surely indicating a direct link between both committees.<sup>118</sup> The committee of 1594 was re-appointed in 1595, and two of the same men were involved in 1597 in handing over money for the church's use.<sup>119</sup> Apart from these mentions no record of those involved on the committee survives until January 1605 when the bailies, dean of guild, treasurer and greater part of the council elected a body that was formally known as the kirk council.<sup>120</sup>

From 1605 onward it is possible, with an exception only in 1640, to examine the election of the kirk council as recorded both in the town council and kirk council minutes. The elections took place any time after the town council elections, between October and January, and the number of people on the council varied from seven to fourteen, although ten members would appear to be the most usual.<sup>121</sup> The posts on the kirk council were divided between merchants and craftsmen but always assuring that the merchant representatives outnumbered the craft representatives. By the election of 1609 the kirk council was little more than the town council sitting as overseers of the church's finances. At no point after 1609

---

117. Ibid.

118. ECA, Kirk Council Minutes, vol. i.

119. Edin. Recs, 1589-1603, 146, 190. In 1598 a sum of 6,000 marks was handed over for the church's use. Ibid., 1589-1603, 221.

120. Ibid., 1604-26, 10; ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 18 Jan. 1605.

121. See table 6.



were fewer than fifty percent of the kirk council's members also sitting as town councillors. Indeed, in 1620, and between 1626-31 all members of the kirk council were also members of the town council. Certainly one of Edinburgh's bailies had been a member of the kirk council every year from 1605, from 1610 the dean of guild also appeared as a member of the council, and from 1620 the town treasurer was, similarly, always a part of the kirk council.<sup>122</sup> The town treasurer's role on the kirk council must have been an inevitable part of his duties for it was not unusual for the town treasurer to finance the church and kirk sessions. In February 1637 the town treasurer was ordered to deliver 5,000 merks to the kirk session and 5,000 merks to the poor house.<sup>123</sup> Obviously it had become important for the town council to make sure that the burgh's church finance was strictly controlled, if Edinburgh was to avoid frequent and unpopular recourse to direct taxation, as happened in Aberdeen, in order to finance the church. The town council made certain that kirk finances were dealt with by those they considered most likely to deal, as the convening prayer of each of the council's meetings stated, ...'in all maters presented ... with upright hairts and single eyes...'.<sup>124</sup>

The wealthiest members of the burgh were well represented on the kirk council. At least forty percent of the kirk council

---

122. In some years even the provost was on the kirk council. He was on it between 1620-22. Not all of the church's financial matters were dealt with by the kirk council. There was a kirk treasurer elected who was an elder. See ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 3 Jan, 28 Dec. 1627; 26 Dec. 1628; 30 Dec. 1629; xv, 24 Aug., 30 Dec. 1636.

123. *Ibid.*, xv, 10, 15 Feb. 1637.

124. ECA, Kirk Council Minutes, i.

TABLE 6. ELITE ON KIRK COUNCIL

Date of Election	No. on Kirk Council	No. of town councillors on Kirk Council	No. of elite on Kirk Council	No. of elite serving on Kirk Council also on Town Council
18 Jan 1605	10	3	4	1
2 Oct 1605	11	5	5	2
15 Oct 1606	10	7	4	4
27 Nov 1607	9	4	5	3
14 Oct 1608	11	5	5	2
6 Oct 1609	11	7	7	5
9 Nov 1610	10	8	4	3
25 Oct 1611	10	6	5	3
25 Dec 1612	10	7	5	2
24 Dec 1613	11	7	6	2
21 Dec 1614	11	8	7	4
3 Nov 1615	9	8	5	5
11 Dec 1616	10	7	5	3
19 Nov 1617	12	8	6	3
28 Oct 1618	13	10	8	6
15 Oct 1619	10	6	6	4
11 Oct 1620	11	11	5	5
5 Oct 1621	12	7	5	5
9 Oct 1622	11	10	6	6
17 Oct 1623	14	13	9	8
8 Oct 1624	13	11	8	6
7 Oct 1625	11	10	6	5
27 Oct 1626	12	12	7	7
10 Oct 1627	7	7	2	2
1 Oct 1628	10	10	5	5
20 Nov 1629	9	9	5	5
12 Jan 1631	10	10	5	5
28 Oct 1631	9	9	5	5
7 Nov 1632	10	9	6	5
9 Oct 1633	11	7	7	4
8 Oct 1634	12	10	8	6
9 Oct 1635	12	9	9	6
7 Oct 1636	13	11	9	6
12 Oct 1637	13	12	8	7
17 Oct 1638	13	10	8	5
1 Oct 1639	14	11	9	6
1640		NO RECORD OF ELECTION		
5 Nov 1641	13	11	7	5

Sources: ECA, Kirk Council Minutes, 2 vols;  
 ECA, MSS, ETCH, xi-xv.

were every year also members of the elite.<sup>125</sup> It is certain that the wealthiest merchants of Edinburgh were also considered most suitable to deal with the church's financial affairs. Perhaps most of the elite who sat on the kirk council did so due to their position as either bailie, dean of guild, treasurer or ordinary councillor rather than due to their position as wealthy men. Certainly in 1606, 1615, between 1620-22 and between 1626-31, all of the elite members on the kirk council were also town councillors. Generally at least one or two elite members not on the town council also sat as the kirk councillors. It was probable that the elite viewed service on the kirk council as a privilege not to be shirked and to be continued through the family. Patrick Cochrane was on the council from 1605 to 1611, although in four of those years he may have been chosen as a town councillor, rather than on personal merit. His son James continued the family interest by sitting as a representative on the kirk council in 1629, 1631, 1634-9 and in 1641, although he too was a town councillor in six of those years. However, even though it seems that most of the elite on the kirk council may have been there because of their role in the burgh government they did manage, in this fashion, to effectively watch over and control kirk income and spending. While service on the kirk session and control over the burgh's morals was regarded as the duty of lesser merchants it seemed imperative to the burgh's elite to hold sway over the important financial aspects of the church.

---

125. This figure did fall to under thirty percent in 1627.  
See table 6.



Again in matters concerning the supervision of the town's charitable institutions the elite were well to the fore. The main support for the relief of the poor, apart from legacies and church contributions, was a legally required, and strictly levied, contribution from the neighbours. For this purpose the burgh kept a roll of those burgesses eligible to pay, according to their means, these subsidies which was subject to periodic revision, involving the deletion of either the dead or poor, and the addition of newly made burgesses. The roll was revised, and new rates of contribution decided upon in December 1600 by eight men selected by the council for the task, obviously considered suitable for this because of their knowledge of the burgh's inhabitants and likely financial status.<sup>126</sup> Of the eight, three, Patrick Cochrane, Richard Dobie and John Jackson were members of the burgh elite. The growth of the burgh necessitated a radical change in the method of assessing this poor levy, for when the roll was next reviewed in 1613 a more formal system of having four reviewers from each quarter had been decided on. These men included six of the burgh elite, James Cochrane and George Suttie in the north-west, John Fairlie, James McMorran and William Rae in the north-east and Patrick Ellis from the south-west quarter.<sup>127</sup> The roll functioned into the 1630s for a further review of it is made in the town council records in 1630. The list of those chosen in May 1630 to review the list of contributors to the poor of the burgh involved three men from each of the four parishes. These included two members of the elite in the north-west

---

126. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 3 Dec. 1600.

127. Ibid., xii, 3 March 1613.

and north-east, and one elite merchant from both the south-east and south-west parishes.<sup>128</sup> The mention, however, in 1623 that a new register of voluntary contributions for the poor was set up by both the town council and kirk sessions indicates, perhaps, that the levies were not functioning properly.<sup>129</sup> The roll was also supplemented by a compulsory contribution to be collected from married people, which is only mentioned in December 1608 and again a year later.<sup>130</sup> The extensors for this included various members of the elite. The elite as prosperous merchants were also regarded as most suitable to plan policy for the care of the poor. In February 1620 the bailies, including two elite merchants, were charged with reviewing the poor rolls with a view to deciding on the distribution of pensions to those listed.<sup>131</sup> In 1625 when a committee of seven commissioners was set up by the town council to examine and decide a solid course for the care of the poor, of the seven merchants selected, four - Mungo and David McCall, Peter Somerville and Nicol Udard - were members of the elite. Indeed, all four were themselves members of the town council for 1624-5. The elite were also involved in what was Edinburgh's main charitable workhouse, St. Paul's Work.<sup>132</sup>

The attempt in 1619 to establish a charitable workhouse for the manufacture of cloth on the site of St. Paul's Work in Leith

---

128. Ibid., xiv, 7 May 1630. The elite members were Andrew Simpson, George Suttie, Alexander Dennistoun, Robert Halyburton, Alexander Speir and John Hilston.

129. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 242.

130. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 28 Dec. 1608; xii, 29 Dec. 1609.

131. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 205.

132. For a discussion of St. Paul's Work see M. Wood, 'St. Paul's Work', B.O.E.C., xvii (1930), 49-75. See also table 7a.

TABLE 7A. ELITE MEMBERS INVOLVED IN ST. PAUL'S  
WORK, AND DRAPERY COUNCIL

		No. of elite	No. of town council members
Jan 1621	6 wardens of St Paul's Work apptd.	3	
Sept 1621	3 wardens of St Paul's Work apptd.	1	
3 Oct 1621	8 members of Drapery Council apptd.	4	2
5 Oct 1622	11 members of Drapery Council apptd.	6	8
17 Oct 1623	12 members of Drapery Council apptd.	7	9
15 Oct 1624	14 members of Drapery Council apptd.	9	10
30 Mar 1631	7 members of Drapery Council apptd.	5	3

TABLE 7B. ELITE MEMBERS INVOLVED IN CORRECTION HOUSE

		No. of elite	No. of town council members
1633	16 members appointed	10	2
1634	10 members appointed	6	1 - bailie
1635	9 members appointed	2	1 - bailie
1636	10 members appointed	3	1 - bailie
1637	10 members appointed	3	1 - bailie
1638	8 members appointed	3	1 - bailie

Source: ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii-xv



Wynd reveals the concern felt by the elite to eliminate the need for public contributions for poor support by setting the indigent to industry. Whether or not this idea of having the needy support themselves by their own industry was ever a viable proposition is difficult to determine. Considerable expense was incurred in 1620 by the town council in both importing Flemish weavers as teachers and building their houses and work areas without any record of returns.<sup>133</sup> What is possible to prove is that the town's wealthiest men both supported and supervised this establishment. The weaving must have commenced by at least January 1621 for a committee of six was appointed as wardens of the drapery. These men included James Speir, George Suttie and David McCall, all elite members.<sup>134</sup> James Speir was appointed as warden of the drapery again in September that year, and this was followed in October by the first appointment of what was formally known as the Drapery Council.<sup>135</sup> There survives a record of the membership of only six Drapery Councils between 1621 and 1631, but these reveal fairly close supervision of the manufactory by both the town council and elite.<sup>136</sup> The Drapery Council, while not exclusively, was almost always chosen from members of the sitting town council. Although the council of 1621 had only two town council members out of eight and the council of 1631 only three town councillors out of seven, between 1622 and 1625 fully three-quarters of the members of each Drapery Council were also

---

133. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 198-202, 208, 209; Wood, 'St. Paul's Work', 56-9.

134. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 218.

135. Ibid., 1604-26, 225, 226; ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 15 Oct. 1621.

136. See Table 7a.

town council members. The town elite were also prominent although this may be more a result of their interest in town government than in the charitable manufacture of cloth. Perhaps the lack of town council interest in the Drapery Council in 1631 reflects somewhat the problems in the manufacture of cloth for in 1632 the cloth workhouse appears to have been combined with a house of correction in which criminal elements were also to weave cloth.<sup>137</sup> The council for the correction house is first recorded as elected in 1633 and runs through to 1638.<sup>138</sup> The town council interest in the correction house was fairly minimal - with only one of the town bailies sitting as their representative in all years except 1633.<sup>139</sup> It must have been felt that the committee, thirty percent of whose membership was made up of the burgh's wealthiest inhabitants, required little formal supervision. There would appear to be a slight connection between the Drapery Council of 1631 and the first correction house council of 1633. Three members of the Drapery Council - John Rhind, John Trotter and William Carnegie - served also on the correction house council, suggesting that the two councils may have had somewhat similar intents.<sup>140</sup> Obviously the burgh elite were concerned about the poor and attempted to lessen their burden of poor contribution by encouraging these self-help manufacturies, and were considered the natural overseers of these projects. Certainly members of the elite were involved in a more direct means with the cloth manufacturing

---

137. Wood, 'St. Paul's Work', 59-60; Edin. Recs., 162b-41, 107-8. A house of correction had been used as a place of cloth manufacturing from at least 1626 but no separate list of its masters exists.

138. See Table 7b.

139. Ibid. In 1633 both council members were ordinary councillors.

140. ECA, MSS, ETCH, xiv, 30 Mar. 1631, 11 Oct. 1633.

at St. Paul's Work for in 1626 the only three registered benefactors of the place were all wealthy merchants.<sup>141</sup> John Trotter gave the works 1,000 merks and was to be on the Drapery Council in 1631, and the correction house council in 1633 and 1637. David McCall who donated 1,000 merks in 1626, had sat on the Drapery Council in 1624, 1625 and 1631. David Jenkin who donated 500 merks in 1626 sat on the correction house committee in 1634, 1635 and 1637. Certain of the elite's legacies also encouraged the work, William Rig left 15,000 merks to be employed in setting the poor of the burgh to work, of which 625 was directly given to St. Paul's Work.<sup>142</sup> William Mauld gave the Drapery 1,000 merks which was used in the establishment of the factory in St. Paul's Work.<sup>143</sup>

The wealthiest members of the community were certainly considered to be the most suitable people to be involved in special voluntary collections of money. As early as 1590 a collection had been set up for the support of the reformed church in Geneva, supervised by two merchants, one of whom was John Morison, a member of the elite.<sup>144</sup> The efforts at collecting were successful, for by August 1604 the treasurer of the collection, William Speir, yet another of the wealthiest merchants, had in his hands some £24,000, which sum the town council borrowed from in order to support local victims of the plague.<sup>145</sup> In order to make up for this use of money one of Edinburgh's elite, William Rig, was appealed to in December 1604 by the council, and he lent

---

141. ECA, Register of Benefactors of St. Paul's Work, 1626, registered 8 Sept. 1626.

142. Edin. Tests, 18 Aug. 1620; Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 210.

143. Ibid., 1604-26, 217, 218. There is no mention of this legacy in his testament, Edin. Tests, 21 June 1620.

144. Edin. Recs., 1589-1603, 22.

145. Ibid., 1604-26, 22.



the Geneva contribution some 4,000 marks.<sup>146</sup> The collection in 1622 of voluntary contributions for the reformed churches in France was yet again orchestrated by the burgh's most influential merchants, including William Dick and James Speir, described as '... instrimantes of delivery of God's Kirk in these parts...'.<sup>147</sup> Dick and Speir, both appointed to the task along with another merchant, by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, were certainly diligent in raising money, for the French minister involved, Benjamin Bannage, left Edinburgh with over £80,000.<sup>148</sup> A further special voluntary collection was set up in 1631 to contribute to the distressed ministers and their families in the Palatinate. Again a majority of those in charge of supervising the collection were considered to be among the wealthiest in the burgh. A merchant and craftsman from each quarter were appointed and all merchants were of the burgh elite.<sup>149</sup> These men managed to raise almost £5,000 which, by order of the privy council, was placed in the hands of George Suttie and William Gray - both members of the elite - who sent the money on to Germany, through another elite member's banking connections in London.<sup>150</sup>

---

146. Ibid., 1604-26, 9.

147. Ibid., 1604-26, 233.

148. Ibid., 1604-26, 233, 235. For a description of the reasons behind this collection see D.H. Fleming ed., 'The Scottish contributions to the distressed church of France, 1622', SHS, Miscellany, III, xix, 2nd series, (1919), 193-202. This includes a list of Edinburgh contributors from St. Cuthbert's church which involved only one of the elite, Sir William Nisbet, who donated £100 (ibid., 194).

149. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 25 Feb. 1631. These men included Thomas Charters, Alexander Dennistoun, Alexander Speir and James Murray.

150. RPC, iv, 1630-32, 118, 131, 277, 357, 492. William Dick despatched the money to Germany via London.

It was Edinburgh's merchant aristocracy which was expected to finance to the burgh any extraordinary sums which the town's affairs required. It was common practice for the burgh to borrow lump sums from various wealthy merchants and to repay the debt, usually with interest, out of the burgh common good or by direct taxation.<sup>151</sup> The town borrowed 5,000 merks in August 1604 from Richard Dobie to pay the commissioners going to England to discuss the matter of the union, which the treasurer repaid in part in May 1605, and August 1606.<sup>152</sup> In August 1617 when the town required some 12,000 merks to purchase the lands of Bonnington the treasurer borrowed 6,600 merks of the sum from Patrick Ellis which was to be repaid by Martinmas or face a penalty of paying ten percent interest on the outstanding sum from the common good.<sup>153</sup> In December 1619 the town was required to repay over 8,000 merks which the council had borrowed for its purposes from George Todrig, James McMath and Ninian McMorran.<sup>154</sup> The same council meeting dealt with the debt of 10,000 merks which the town had owed to William Rig from June 1618 and which he was demanding. Obviously not having the sum the town turned to two other wealthy merchants, Thomas Speir and James Cochrane, to lend them the money at an annual interest of ten percent.<sup>155</sup> In June 1620 the council, in order to repay William Dick a sum of over £13,000 which they owed him, again borrowed money from the wealthiest merchants at ten percent interest.<sup>156</sup> In May 1638

---

151. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 2 May, 27 June 1604; 20 Mar, 12 Apr. 1605.

152. Ibid., xi, 29 May 1605, 5 Aug. 1606.

153. Ibid., xii, 15 Aug. 1617.

154. Ibid., xiii, 13 Dec. 1619.

155. Ibid.

156. Ibid., xiii, 21 June 1620.

the town borrowed 25,000 marks from John Trotter.<sup>157</sup> James Dalglish was owed 2,000 marks by the town in 1639; John Fleming was owed over £8,000 in 1642; and Thomas Moodie almost £4,000 by 1650.<sup>157</sup> The wealthiest men of the burgh were not only expected to serve the burgh on the town council or the various committees but were also expected to finance the town when requested; although usually in return for interest on the lent sum.

The elite were considered best suited to represent the burgh on commissions sent abroad. In March 1604 William Nisbet was sent to England on the town's affairs.<sup>158</sup> In August 1605 William Speir was one of the two Edinburgh representatives sent to England and France.<sup>159</sup> It was their particular commission to audit the accounts of the factors in Dieppe.<sup>160</sup> In 1611 six of the seven commissioners sent to consider a possible shift of the Staple from Campvere to Middelburg were members of the town's elite.<sup>161</sup> Both in 1625 and 1629 three members of the elite were entrusted with advising the commissioners sent to London on the town's behalf.<sup>162</sup> Perhaps it was due to their intimate knowledge of foreign trade that when the Commission of Royal Burghs selected a committee to review the book of rates on imports in 1612 all six of the members were members of Edinburgh's mercantile elite.<sup>163</sup> Indeed, the commission was to meet in the house of

---

157. Edin. Tests, Euphame Nasmith, 6 Aug. 1639; 15 June 1642; Jean Jameson, 17 Apr. 1650.

158. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 14 Mar. 1604.

159. Ibid., xi, 9 Aug. 1605.

160. Ibid., xi, 21 Aug. 1605.

161. Ibid., xii, 15 Mar. 1611.

162. Ibid., xiv, 6 Nov. 1625, 17 July 1629.

163. RCRB, ii, 375-6.



Ninian McMorran, a wealthy Edinburgh merchant.<sup>164</sup>

It is surprising given the scope of the elite's involvement in burgh affairs, on financial bodies and on important political committees that there appears to have been relatively little corruption. The men chosen must have felt duty bound to uphold both their own and the honour of the burgh. Only once in the first thirty-eight years of the seventeenth century was an Edinburgh town councillor removed from office. On 23 June 1615 Mr. Nicol Brown was cited before the council for contriving with John Brown in Prestonpans and assisting him against the bailies before the Privy Council, in an action concerning the liberties of the burgh.<sup>165</sup> As a result of this Mr. Nicol Brown was deprived of his office as councillor. Brown had been elected a town constable in 1611 and was serving for the first time as a councillor in 1614-5.<sup>166</sup> He was obviously considered as a merchant of some potential worthy of high office for his entrance into town politics in 1614 coincided with him being taxed that year as amongst the elite for the first time, and he had been chosen in April 1615 to be one of the inspectors of the high school.<sup>167</sup> Certainly, after his deprivation he never served the town again in any capacity. It is not known what form his offence took, perhaps seeking the personal aid of his privy council acquaintances against the town council on the behalf of his kinsman. He certainly was intimately connected with the men involved with the privy council, for upon his death

---

164. Ibid., ii, 376.

165. RPC, x, 342. John Brown was accused of assaulting an Edinburgh burgess. The Edinburgh bailies claimed jurisdiction over the case, which Brown disputed.

166. Edin.Recs, 1604-26, 129.

167. Ibid., 1604-26, 119-20, ECA, MSS, ETCR, xii, 7 Sept. 1611.

in 1628 James Primrose, clerk to the privy council, and John Bannatyne, justice clerk, were named as his executors.<sup>168</sup>

This incident is, however, an isolated one for in no other instance were members of Edinburgh's elite removed from their positions of authority.

The civic duties of Edinburgh's merchant elite between 1600 and 1638 were both manifold and time-consuming. By 1640 the town council was dominated by a group of inter-related merchants, all of whom were paying tax as the wealthiest men of the burgh. The intimate familial and business connections extended beyond mere service in Leith or on the town council of Edinburgh, into all aspects of burgh life and politics; service as elders or deacons of the kirk, as town constables, company commanders, and as the burgh's representatives at parliament and the Convention of Royal Burghs. Although the number of men serving on these bodies was limited in practice to members of an inner-circle of families, these men's influence was extended by both their business and blood relationships with other wealthy merchants who did not serve the town in any form. Social control of Edinburgh was firmly under the control of the burgh's wealthiest men. Certainly the tendency of a small, wealthy elite to consolidate urban power into their hands was a trend reflected in other European cities. Nördlingen's town council became, during the seventeenth century, little more than a self-perpetuating body of inter-related wealthy families. Power was controlled by a group increasingly isolated from those they were supposedly to serve, less able both to understand the particular problems of the ordinary citizenry, and to cope with

---

168. Edin. Tests, 25 Nov. 1628.

them in times of economic and political stress.<sup>169</sup> Similarly, London was under the control of its wealthiest merchants, although its size and wealth allowed a greater extent of social mobility.<sup>170</sup> Edinburgh, on the brink of social and economic chaos in 1638, was controlled by a tight grouping of merchant aristocrats, a clique more rigid than that which had ruled it even fifty years previously. In direct contrast to this, the wealthiest merchants of seventeenth-century Aberdeen played little part in burgh government, and the council of Glasgow was a relatively easily accessible institution, open to newcomers even in the later years of the seventeenth century.<sup>171</sup> By 1640, social and political control of Edinburgh had become the sole prerogative of the burgh's wealthiest merchants who, perhaps because of their own narrow and exalted social connections, had become somewhat alienated from the concerns of the general populace and less capable of understanding their society's problems.

---

169. C. Friedrichs, Urban Society in an Age of War: Nördlingen, 1580-1720 (Princeton, 1979), 170, 179, 184-5, 196.

170. F. Foster, The Politics of Stability (1977), 93-103.

171. MacNiven, Merchant and Trader, 106, 280, 286; Smout, 'The Glasgow merchant community in the seventeenth century', 70.



## CHAPTER THREE

MERCHANTS AND MERCHANDISING

It has been quite correctly stated that it was trade, and in particular the pursuit of foreign trade, which was the hinge upon which the prosperity of any early modern nation was based; its wealth expanded or contracted in relation to the successes or failures of those directly involved in merchandising.<sup>1</sup> Scotland was, in this respect, from the mid-fifteenth century no different to any other nation. The merchants of early modern Scotland were certainly not immune to the economic pressures and market forces faced by other European communities. However, studies of seventeenth-century Scotland have in the main either ignored the economy prior to 1660 or have approached it in a somewhat pessimistic fashion - stressing its shortcomings, dismissing it as essentially conservative, lacking in initiative, and emphasising its desperate poverty.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, when compared with the mercantile economies of England or Continental Europe at the same time Scotland does appear to be little more than a commercial backwater, of interest only to those areas of northern Europe accustomed to trading links with it from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Yet, it has also been argued that the stability, both political and economic, of the late sixteenth

---

1. T.C. Smout, Scottish Trade on the Eve of the Union (Edinburgh, 1963), 23.

2. Mitchison, Lordship to Patronage, virtually ignores the economy prior to 1660; Colahan, The Cautious Revolutionaries, 112; Lythe, The Economy of Scotland in its European Setting, 35-6; Smout, Scottish Trade, 27-8; H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Scotland and the Puritan revolution', in Religion, the Reformation and Social Change (1967), 395-6, in which he states that Edinburgh was destitute of mercantile spirit.

and early seventeenth centuries changed the very nature of Scottish commerce allowing it to develop and expand as never before.<sup>3</sup> It may be argued that more than any other group in the country it was the merchant community of Edinburgh, and in particular the wealthiest men of the burgh, who were most able to take advantage of these changes and were ultimately to reap unprecedented economic rewards. They were, as well, to suffer the most from the eventual collapse of the economy in the 1640s.

As early as 1600 Edinburgh, while being dismissed as of little architectural interest, had been recognized as the busiest commercial town in the country, possessing one of the best harbours in Scotland.<sup>4</sup> Certainly it was, and had long been the pre-eminent business centre of Scotland; where Edinburgh's merchants led those of the rest of the country were bound to eventually follow. Not only did the capital's share of each of the various taxes imposed by the Convention of Royal Burghs upon its members from 1597 onwards equal some thirty percent of the entire tax, but the burgh was also the dominant force in Scottish overseas trade - generating sixty percent of all custom revenue in Scotland from 1460 to 1599.<sup>5</sup> It was the capital's merchants, and in particular the elite, who directed the economic domination which Edinburgh had on all branches of Scottish trade between 1600 and 1638. From what evidence survives it would appear that Edinburgh's merchant princes were

---

3. J. Wormald, Court, Kirk and Community (1981), 173; T.M. Devine and S.G.E. Lythe, 'The economy of Scotland under James VI', 104-6; I. Guy, The Scottish Export Trade, 1460-1599, (unpublished University of St. Andrews M.Phil, 1982), 173.

4. Brown, Early Travellers in Scotland, 93. Described by the Duc de Rohan.

5. RCRB, i-iii; Guy, The Scottish Export Trade, 170, fig. 7.2.

directly concerned with the exporting of goods on between fifty-four and sixty-five percent of all ships leaving Leith; in importing merchandise on between twenty-five and fifty percent of all ships arriving at the capital's port; and were responsible for at least thirty percent of all goods imported to Leith between 1636 and 1639. Where it has been possible to total actual figures of imports and exports for the 1620s the elite emerge as the chief exporters of skins, plaiding and fish as well as the most important importers of cloth, grain and luxury goods. It was without doubt the wealthiest men of the capital who were responsible for the subtle shifts in the traditional patterns of Scottish trade which took place during these years, altering the emphasis of trade towards markets which had hitherto been of minor importance to the economy; in particular they moved towards closer commercial ties with England. What is remarkable, however, is that evidence of this involvement in, and direction of foreign trade survives for no more than 195 of the 310 different merchants considered to be amongst the wealthiest of the burgh. The statement that the inhabitants of Edinburgh during the first decades of the seventeenth century devoted themselves to trade and prospered exceedingly<sup>6</sup> must then be regarded in a somewhat different light - for this trade and the prosperity of the entire country was firmly in the hands of a handful of its very wealthiest men.

---

6. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, p. ix.



To begin with a somewhat cautionary note must be sounded regarding the sources available for a study of the influence which the Edinburgh elite had upon Scottish trade during the first forty years of the seventeenth century. When compared to the English ports, with their survival of fairly complete customs records for the period, Leith seems sadly lacking in evidence of its trade during these years. The records of the exchequer are of limited use in any attempt to examine the role played by the elite in Scottish trade. Only after a governmental reorganization in 1617 does an unbroken, detailed series of customar's accounts exist in the exchequer records. Between 1600 and 1617 these customs had been set in tack for most years and are of no use in examining the import and export figures.<sup>7</sup> It is possible to use the exchequer rolls totals for Leith in 1624-5 and 1626-7 to compare with the totals given in the customs books for exports from that port in those years. The two sets of figures agree on most commodities except cloth, and, in 1624-5, on skins. It has been stated that the exchequer figures, other than money, were counted in 'long hundreds' of six score.<sup>8</sup> However, this method depends upon the use of the symbol 'C' to represent this 'great hundred'; and the use of a symbol of 'xx' to represent scores, indicating an 'ordinary hundred'.<sup>9</sup> While the customars of Dumfries, Kirkcudbright and Wigtown have been shown to have been using the 'long hundred' as late as the 1620s in counting sheepskins and cloth there is little evidence to

---

7. SR0, E38 series; A. Murray, 'The customs accounts of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright 1560-1660', Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society, third series, xlii (1965), 116-7.

8. Ibid., 127-9; P. Gouldesbrough, 'The 'Long Hundred' in the Exchequer Rolls', SHR, xlv (1967), 79-82.

9. Ibid., 80.

support the assumption that it was being used generally in Edinburgh in the early seventeenth century. The exchequer rolls themselves make use of a symbol 'H' to indicate hundreds rather than a 'C' and do not count goods in scores. The list of customs charged per item in 1626-7 will agree with the total collected if the 'ordinary hundred' is used; that list itself states that grain was counted in the 'ordinary hundred'. The import lists of 1621-3 also appear to use the ordinary hundred in measuring cloth; broad cloth was charged at six shillings per yard which agrees in all cases over 100 yards with a use of the 'ordinary hundred'. It would be rash indeed to assume that the exchequer figures are in 'long hundreds' and adjust them accordingly, for this 'long hundred' would apply only to shipments amounting to over 100 units and it is impossible to tell how the total given in the exchequer roll is broken down. A mere adjustment of exchequer figures in this way will serve only to inflate the actual numbers of goods.<sup>10</sup> It would also be somewhat surprising if the 'long hundred' had survived into the seventeenth century in Scotland's most important port as it had not been in regular use in England since the fifteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The only work on the use of the 'long hundred' does state that in customars' accounts its use is not easily demonstrated and that '... many examples can of course be found in which the figures make sense if either the ordinary or the

---

10. MacNiven, *Merchant and Trader*, corrects the exchequer roll figures for Aberdeen in the assumption that they were counted in the 'long hundred'. His totals for cloth are very high. McMillan, *The Edinburgh Burgess Community*, ignores the entire issue.

11. I am grateful to Mr. David Ditchburn for this information. The Scottish exchequer rolls of the fourteenth century did use the symbol 'C' and must have used the 'long hundred'. I am grateful to Dr. E.L. Ewan for this information.

long hundred is understood'.<sup>12</sup> The figures for Edinburgh do generally tally with customs charged if the ordinary hundred is used and therefore in all calculations its use has been assumed.

However, a series of customs lists for Leith do survive and shed some light on the economic activities of the port.

It is possible to examine the exports from Leith for four years: from July 1611 to July 1612, from November 1624 to November 1625 and from November 1626 to November 1628.<sup>13</sup> These records give information on what goods were exported, who was involved with these cargoes, what foreign ports they were bound for, on what ship, and the date of leaving Leith. Lists of imports to Leith during this period also exist for five years between 1600 and 1639: from November 1621 to November 1623 and from August 1636 to November 1639, although there is a distinct difference between the records of the 1620s and those of the 1630s.<sup>14</sup> While the import lists of 1621 to 1623 follow the pattern of the export lists giving an itemized account of the imports, the lists for 1636 onwards reveal only a limited amount of information. The 'Book of the Merk of the Tun' supplies only the name of the port from which the ship arrived, the name of the ship's master, a name of an Edinburgh merchant responsible for the goods and payment of the dues, and an estimate of the number of tuns unloaded

---

12. Gouldesbrough, 'The 'Long Hundred' in the Exchequer Rolls', 82.

13. SRO, E71/29/6, 9, 11, E71/30/30. The 1624-5 list gives only lists of goods with no mention of intended ports of export.

14. SRO, E71/29/7, 8; ECA, Merk of the Tun; Shore Dues.



at the port, with no separate listing of items. The account of shore dues collected from Martinmas 1638 to 1639, and other local duty, reveals basically the same information although it does name the ship arriving and sometimes gives a vague description of the goods imported. It does not, however, mention the names of the merchants responsible for the goods brought in. What the account does reveal is information on the number of ships arriving in Leith from other Scottish ports - the only list of this kind for any of the first forty years of the century. There also survives incidental references to imports. These include a partial list of ships arriving at Leith in 1611 from London alone; accounts of cloth being imported by land from England from 1624 to 1628 and a list of tobacco imports from November 1626 to November 1627.<sup>15</sup> Even taking into account that most of the years for which excise records exist were ones of disruption to trade due either to war or famine when these trade figures are added to the evidence from the testaments of the burgh's wealthiest men, the Edinburgh town council records, those of the Convention of Royal Burghs, the records of the privy council as well as the plentiful surviving private business papers of the elite, it is possible to indicate the important role played by this group in Scottish trade. These combined sources certainly belie the statements that the details of Edinburgh's overseas trade are merely confined to a handful of fragmentary and unrepresentative customs books and that private business papers are unavailable to cast new light on the essential part

---

15. SRO, E71/29/5, E71/30/30, E71/29/9, 10, 11.

which Edinburgh's merchants, let alone the elite, played in the Scottish economy.<sup>16</sup>

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed a marked growth in the trade and prosperity of most Continental and English urban centres. It also appears that in the majority of early modern towns it was the wealthiest entrepreneurs who directed this growth. Examinations of the economies of Leiden and Lille during this period reveal that it was the wealthiest townspeople, in particular those involved with the cloth trade, who generated the innovations in trade and commerce which brought substantial profits to both them and their towns.<sup>17</sup> The urban patriciate of Leiden in the last fifty years of the sixteenth century, a group which also brought a significant and unprecedented wealth into the town, was dominated by those merchants involved in trade outwith the town and specifically those concerned with the cloth trade.<sup>18</sup> Those involved in the textile trade in Nördlingen aided its growth in the late sixteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Amsterdam also grew in wealth from the late sixteenth century to become the unsurpassed leader in European trade, although the majority of its richest merchants were involved in the Baltic grain

---

16. McMillan, *The Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 114, 214, 287.

17. Dupplexis and Howell, 'Reconsidering the early modern urban economy', 49, 53, 63, 65, 83-4.

18. Lamet, *Men in Government*, 133, 181, 184.

19. Friedrichs, *Urban Society in an Age of War*, 105, 107, 114, 140, 239-87.

trade or as middlemen in the export market rather than as cloth manufacturers.<sup>20</sup> London's wealth and supremacy as Britain's richest city during this time was created in the main by the elite of its foreign-trading cloth merchants.<sup>21</sup> Elizabethan Exeter's prosperity was the result of the foreign trade pursued by a handful of its wealthiest merchants.<sup>22</sup> It has been shown that Norwich expanded rapidly from about 1600, in both population and wealth and that it was the cloth merchants who emerged as the town's elite.<sup>23</sup> The prosperity of Ipswich, which reached its peak in the early seventeenth century, was guided both by those merchants capable of trading abroad and by the affluence of its textile industry, a trade which was to decline by the end of the century.<sup>24</sup> It has also been suggested that the economies of provincial centres like Bristol, Newcastle, Yarmouth and Hull, amongst others, were revitalized in the late sixteenth century by the growth and expansion of their overseas trade, although they were to be adversely affected by the political problems and wars of the 1640s.<sup>25</sup>

Research has shown that from the middle of the sixteenth century the Scottish economy also reflected general European trends and entered a boom period. By the seventeenth century

---

20. V. Barbour, Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century, (Ann Arbor, 1963), 11-16, 18, 27, 88.

21. Foster, Politics of Stability, 108-11, 152, 158.

22. Hoskins, 'Elizabethan merchants of Exeter', 148, 153. He states that there were no more than 100 merchants.

23. Corfield, 'A provincial capital in the late seventeenth century', 233, 243-5.

24. Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth-century Ipswich', 99, 104, 106-8, 126, 129.

25. P. Clark, 'English country towns 1500-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England (Leicester, 1981), 11-17; D.C. Coleman, The Economy of England 1450-1750 (Oxford, 1977), 58.



this economic vigour and vitality was to radically alter the traditional patterns of the nation's trade. It has been surmised, albeit somewhat grudgingly that '... under the more stable conditions ... [of James VI's reign] ... there was some dissemination of prosperity ... [and that] ... the economic heart of Scotland was beating more soundly in 1625 ... than it had ever beaten before.'<sup>26</sup> Certainly this growth was reflected in the records of the exchequer which, even allowing for inflation and the revision of custom rates in 1593, reveal that revenue collected on exports alone rose dramatically in the last decade of the sixteenth century. It rose from an average of about £3,000 annually between 1460 and 1590 to £6,000 in 1594, £8,000 in 1597, £12,000 the following year and £8,000 in 1600.<sup>27</sup> Both exports from Scotland - of cloth, knitted wares, coal, wool and fish - and imports into the country - of both raw materials and luxury goods - reached unprecedented levels in the 1630s.<sup>28</sup> This growth in commerce was almost exclusively directed by Edinburgh and its merchants.

Between 1460 and 1600 at least eighty percent of the custom revenue collected by the exchequer was generated by the top three burghs of the realm - Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee - as well as the Pittenweem group of burghs in Fife. However, Edinburgh increasingly dominated Scottish trade. Its share of the total grew from fifty-four percent of all export revenue collected in

---

26. Lythe, 'The economy of Scotland under James VI and I', 73. S.G.E. Lythe, 'Economic Life' in J.M. Brown (ed.), Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century (1977), points out the differences and limitations of the Scottish economy in the fifteenth century.

27. Guy, The Scottish Export Trade, 166-7, 174.

28. Donaldson, James V-VII, 244-52.

Scotland in 1480 to fifty-nine percent in 1530 and sixty-five percent in 1578. Between 1460 and 1600 Edinburgh alone accounted for seventy-six percent of all wool exported from Scotland; seventy percent of all wool cloth; seventy percent of all sheepskins; and sixty-three percent of all hides - these being the staple articles of Scottish exports during the period. By the end of the century the capital had a virtual monopoly over most trade: it was responsible for over eighty percent of all sheepskins exported, eighty-three percent of the hides exported and seventy-three percent of cloth of all kinds leaving the country.<sup>29</sup> The history of Scottish trade in the last years of the sixteenth century was one in which the nation's capital figured almost to the complete exclusion of any other burgh. Within this dominance there was, however, a further division. For, behind the economic stranglehold which the capital held on the nation's trade lay the brains, money, power and initiative of the burgh's wealthiest entrepreneurs.

As with English and Continental towns there existed only a handful of merchants in Edinburgh between 1600 and 1638 with sufficient capital, merchandising skills, resources and trading connections to be capable of attempting to align the burgh with the mainstream early modern European markets. It is, perhaps, somewhat surprising that evidence of the involvement in foreign trade, whether directly as overseas traders or even such indirect evidence as the existence of foreign goods in the merchants' possession at the time of their death, survives for only sixty-three

---

29. All this is based on the work of Guy, *The Scottish Export Trade*, 10, 20, 72, 77, 93, 97, 170, figs. 1A and D, 3.1A, 3.5A, 4.1A, 4.5A, 4.9A. Aberdeen also experienced a boom in trade during these years. See MacNiven, *Merchant and Trader*, 206-11.



percent of those considered to be amongst the most influential merchants of the burgh and, therefore, of Scotland. The commercial life of the burgh, which had a population of 25,000, was totally dominated by fewer than 200 men. Those merchants involved in foreign trade in any of the larger Scottish burghs must always, of course, have been a select body. Aberdeen, the third largest burgh in Scotland, could boast in the 1620s of perhaps only 300 active traders and of those a mere seventy-five were in any year involved in overseas trade.<sup>30</sup> The merchant community of Glasgow even as late as the 1680s merely numbered between 400 and 500 merchants of whom no more than a quarter were regularly involved as overseas adventurers.<sup>31</sup> Edinburgh's merchant community in the mid-sixteenth century consisted, it has been suggested, of probably no more than 400 merchants rising to about 500 by 1583. Of these, no more than 120 could be considered to have been the town's elite.<sup>32</sup> An examination of over 200 testaments of late sixteenth-century Edinburgh merchants has revealed only a handful containing references to the deceased's involvement in overseas trade.<sup>33</sup> Certainly the suggestion that there were 600 active merchants in the burgh in 1600 seems slightly exaggerated; at most in any one year up to 1640 there were between 400 and 500 merchants, of whom a third may have been overseas traders.<sup>34</sup>

The bulk of Edinburgh's trade in the seventeenth century was the business of a remarkably small number of the burgh's

---

30. *Ibid.*, 134.

31. Smout, 'The Glasgow merchant community', 61-2. The elite of Glasgow's merchants numbered no more than thirty men.

32. Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation*, 10, 51-2. These 120 monopolized about seventy percent of all merchant wealth. Not all of these were overseas traders.

33. Sanderson, 'The Edinburgh merchants in society', 189-99.

34. McMillan, *The Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 114 and see above p. 27.



merchants. While no firm figures exist of the total number of Edinburgh merchants involved in overseas trade between 1600 and 1638 it is possible to indicate the dominance which the elite had on trade by using the Leith customs records which survive for certain years of imports between 1611 and 1639 and of exports between 1611 and 1628. These records reveal that only 173 different members of the burgh elite were involved in either importing or exporting goods to or from Leith at any point during these years. There is a more significant hidden pattern within these figures. A total of fifty-five of those 173 were engaged only in importing; forty-one of the 173 merchants were involved only in exporting goods; and seventy-seven were involved in both importing and exporting. While forty-four percent of the burgh's wealthiest merchants were involved in both the importing and exporting market almost fifty-six percent of them were specialized merchants dealing only in one branch of that trade. Of this, it was the importing of goods which attracted the attention of most merchants.

It has been suggested that fewer than 170 merchants in all imported goods to Leith in 1621-2.<sup>35</sup> Of these 170 men some eighty-six, or fifty percent of all Edinburgh merchants importing goods that year, were members of the burgh elite. The following year eighty-four members of the elite imported goods to Leith, probably equalling the same overall percentage as the previous year.<sup>36</sup> Between 1636 and 1639 a mere fifty-nine members of the

---

35. Ibid. Based on an examination of the Leith custom book she guesses that 200 different traders brought in merchandise that year. Not all of them were regular overseas traders and some thirty were merchants of other burghs. She offers no other figures of the numbers of merchants involved in overseas trade. See also SR0, E71/29/7.

36. SR0, E71/29/8.

burgh elite were responsible for the importing of over thirty-two percent of the goods arriving at Leith.<sup>37</sup> The export lists reveal a similar pattern, although even fewer elite merchants were involved. Between 1611 and 1612 seventy-four elite members exported goods from Leith; in 1624-5 fifty-nine elite merchants exported goods; and in the two years between 1626 and 1628 only fifty-eight of the burgh's wealthiest men were involved in the export market.<sup>38</sup> Yet, these few men managed between them to export a sizeable proportion of the goods leaving the port. From this evidence it would appear that from the early part of the seventeenth century both the import and export trade of the nation's most vital economic centre was becoming firmly ensconced in the hands of fewer and fewer of the burgh's wealthiest men.

It is possible to compare the amounts of imports and exports of the elite to and from Leith with the total imports and exports for only a few years, mainly in the 1620s.<sup>39</sup> However limited this evidence may seem, and even taking into account the fact that the French ports were closed to Scottish trade in the late 1620s due to war, the domination which the elite had over the trade of Leith, and in particular the cloth trade, during these years is remarkable. The eighty-six elite merchants importing goods into the capital's port in 1621-2 were responsible for an average of just over thirty percent of all the cereals arriving at Leith. They imported over sixty-eight percent of all beans, forty-three percent of all oats and thirty-four percent of all bear - the staple grain imports.

---

37. ECA, Merk of the Tun.

38. SRO, E71/29/6; E71/30/30; E71/29/9, 11.

39. See appendices I and II.

The only cereal they were not involved with was wheat - a crop which was grown in Scotland and was never of great import value.<sup>40</sup> The following year, 1622-3, the elite, consisting of only eighty-four merchants, imported again an average of about thirty percent of the cereals arriving at Leith. However, the total amount of grain imported by any of the Edinburgh merchants that year increased dramatically over the previous year. The amount of beans imported in 1622-3 increased by six-fold and oats by three-fold although the amount of bear and peas imported dropped. The elite imported more beans and oats than in 1621-2 but not in direct proportion to the overall increase. Indeed, their overall involvement in the grain market in 1622-3 shows a drop in interest over the previous year. These figures would tend to indicate that the grain trade was becoming of less importance to the elite. It does, nevertheless, show that the wealthiest men in the country were familiar with the grain markets of the Netherlands and the Baltic.<sup>41</sup> They were, however, more involved overall in the importing of cloth.

The members of the burgh's elite were the chief importers of cloth to Leith in both 1621 and 1622. An average of at least sixty-five percent of all cloth arriving in Leith by sea in 1621-2 and at least fifty percent in 1622-3 was brought in under their auspices. The elite were the dominant importers not only of the new products of the English cloth manufactories - bays and says,

---

40. I. Whyte, *Agrarian Change in Lowland Scotland in the Seventeenth Century* (unpublished University of Edinburgh Ph.D., 1975), 144-6. Five members of the elite were charged in 1618 with illegal importation of wheat in 1618 (RPC, xi, 431-2).

41. McMillan, *The Edinburgh Burgess Community*, shows that fifty-two percent of grain imported in 1621-3 came from the Netherlands and thirty-four percent from the Baltic, 253.



risills, pyropus and grograin - but also of Holland cloth, importing sixty-two percent of the total in 1621-2 and almost ninety percent the following year.<sup>42</sup> The import of products related to the cloth industry, such as dye-stuffs, also interested the elite, without being of major importance. About a quarter of the dye brazil was imported by the elite over both of these years, about the same proportion of azure, over forty percent of the indigo, forty-four percent of the madder and about twelve percent of the orchard litt. The import of manufactured items of clothing were also of concern to the elite: they imported over twenty percent of the girdles brought to Leith, fifteen percent of the gloves, thirty-six percent of all hats and forty-five percent of the stockings. A high proportion of these goods considered as luxury items: paper, aniseed, spices, drinking glasses, honey, playing-cards, rice, sugar and sugar-candy, were all cargoes imported by the elite.

The elite appear to have had an interest in most of the sorts of merchandise brought into Leith during these years. Yet, they seem to have been least involved in the importing of items which could be termed as industrial hardware, despite the alleged upsurge in importance of these goods from the early 1620s.<sup>43</sup> Although to some extent the elite brought cargoes of timber and burnewood to Leith, relatively little of the alum, deals and planks, hards, hemp, iron, flax, knappalds and wanescotting imported, all of which were basically products of trade with

---

42. It must be remembered that cloth was also imported by land from England. See below pp. 161-3.

43. Devine and Lythe, 'The economy of Scotland under James VI', 102.

Norway, was their responsibility. This, perhaps, reflects the minimal role which industry and manufacturing played for the elite in particular, and the country as a whole.<sup>44</sup>

Due to the nature of the import lists after 1636 it is impossible to discuss the elite's role in relation to what sorts of goods were imported.<sup>45</sup> It is only possible to indicate the continuing general dominance which the elite had on imports to Leith. The elite, numbering no more than sixty men, paid the shore dues on forty percent of the goods arriving in Leith in late 1636, on a third in 1636-7, on thirty percent in 1637-8 and thirty-three percent in 1638-9. Although the late 1630s saw a sharp drop in the amount of goods imported by sea to Leith - falling from 13,000 tons in 1636-7 to a mere 6,000 tons in 1638-9 - the elite's share remained a steady third of this. Certainly the places where the elite were purchasing goods - largely the Baltic, Netherlands and France - remained much as in the 1620s.

While it would, perhaps, be incorrect to state that the elite were becoming highly specialized, either as cloth or as grain merchants, these would appear to have been their major imports during the early years of the seventeenth century. Certainly, the handful of elite merchants involved in these trades totally dominated their importation to the country. About half of all merchants involved in importing goods between 1621 and 1623 were members of Edinburgh's mercantile aristocracy, this despite the fact that Edinburgh was used by merchants of other burghs as an entrepot. The Edinburgh elite imported more than half of all goods brought to Leith in those years. Although between 1636

---

44. For a discussion of the role played by the elite in industry see chapter four.

45. The lists do not detail which goods were imported. See appendix II.

and 1639 only about a third of all goods imported into Leith were brought in under the elite's auspices the number of merchants involved was much smaller indicating that trade was becoming more rigidly the prerogative of a few wealthy men. Certainly this was also the case when exports from the burgh were examined.

The predominant role which the elite played in importing to Leith was also carried over into exporting goods from the port in 1611-2, 1624-5 and 1626-8, the only years for which it is possible to compare the elite's share of goods exported with total exports.<sup>46</sup> The goods exported by the elite certainly fall within the traditional range of Scottish exports. They included skins, salt, fish, cloth, hides and coal.<sup>47</sup> In 1611-2 only seventy-four members of the elite, probably no more than forty percent of all Edinburgh merchants trading overseas, exported goods from Leith. Yet, they exported over forty percent of all the grain crops leaving Leith, including a spectacular ninety percent of all bear. If the figures given of Scottish produce and goods exported yearly out of all Scottish ports between 1611 and 1614 are accurate, the Edinburgh elite in 1611-2 were responsible for no less than thirty percent of all oats exported from the country and for over sixty percent of the exports of bear and malt.<sup>48</sup>

The elite were responsible for exporting almost twelve percent of the lambskins leaving Leith, twenty-two percent of all rabbit skins and fifty-five percent of all hides.<sup>49</sup> The

---

46. See appendix III.

47. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 159.

48. H. Paton (ed.), Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie, HMC, lx (1904), 70-74.

49. See appendix III.



figure of annual exports from all ports of sheepskins is given as 238,666 which meant that seventy-four Edinburgh merchants alone exported almost eighteen percent of the sheepskins exported from Scotland - one of the staple exports of the country.<sup>50</sup> The same merchants also exported forty-one percent of all hides and thirty-one percent of the total number of deerskins exported from ports throughout the country.<sup>51</sup> Their role as lamb, goat or rabbitskin exporters was, however, of limited importance to the country amounting to only about one percent of all the skins leaving Scotland.<sup>52</sup>

The elite were solely responsible for exporting over 23,000 ells of cloth and plaiding, some sixteen percent of the total exported from the country. They exported almost ten percent of all the knitted hose, three percent of all salt, seven percent of all the gloves and twenty-four percent of all feathers leaving the country, let alone Leith, in any one year up to 1614.<sup>53</sup> The elite exported forty-four percent of the herring and fifty-four percent of the salmon leaving Leith in 1611-2. This came to about eight percent of the country's total exports of herring and twenty percent of the entire salmon exports.<sup>54</sup> It is somewhat surprising that no wool was exported from Leith that year for the table of Scottish produce exported yearly states that over 10,000 stones were exported from the combined ports every year.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, in

---

50. Paton, Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie, 71; Appendix III. McMillan, Edinburgh Burgess Community, 297, fails to give totals of sheepskins. See note below, p. 433.

51. Paton, Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie, 71.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 72.

54. Ibid., 73. The elite were also exporting eight percent of all wax, five percent of all brass, twelve percent of all deals and sixty-two percent of all pitch and tar.

55. See appendix III.

1611-2 the Edinburgh merchant elite were without doubt the most important group of overseas exporters, exporting an average of forty percent of goods, usually the staple products of the Scottish export market.

The hold which the elite had over the export trade from Leith continued unabated in the 1620s. They dominated the grain and cloth exports from Leith in particular. During 1624-5 a mere fifty-nine of the wealthiest men of the burgh exported from Leith. Nine elite members alone exported an average of about forty percent of all cereals leaving from Leith. These nine men exported all of the wheat, rye and malt leaving the port although these totalled only 780 bolls. While the elite alone exported over 2,800 bolls of bear the total exported has been calculated at only 1,390 bolls. The exchequer roll for 1624-5 almost agrees with this figure, recording that a combined total of 1,780 bolls of wheat and bear were exported.<sup>56</sup> Part of the discrepancy may have been the fact that two members of the elite actually acted as factors for George Seton, third earl of Winton in the export of 2,380 bolls of bear which may have been free of export duties.<sup>57</sup> If so, the elite, numbering no more than nine merchants, then exported thirty-five percent of all bear leaving Leith in 1624-5. Only twenty-one different members of the elite exported any sort of hides or skins from Leith that year. These men exported over 26,000 sheepskins, about thirty percent of the total leaving Leith, or

---

56. McMillan, *Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 297; SR0, E38/587.

57. Winton was a privy councillor and a noted grain exporter. See J.B. Paul (ed.), The Scots Peerage (Edinburgh, 1911), viii, 593-4; SR0, E71/30/30.

thirty-five percent, if the exchequer roll figures are used.<sup>58</sup> The elite's share of lambskins also differs slightly according to the exchequer roll total, although again not by a lot, rising by less than one percent.<sup>59</sup> Their share of the footfells exported, however, falls from forty-one to thirty-seven percent according to the exchequer roll.<sup>60</sup> The roll also records the export of only eighty and a half daikers of hides while the customs record of Leith lists 368.5 daikers exported by the elite, some forty-five percent of the total.<sup>61</sup> Fifteen of the wealthiest merchants of the burgh exported close to sixty percent of the cloth and plaiding leaving Leith according to that port's customs book, but eighty-five percent if the exchequer roll figures are used.<sup>62</sup> Members of the elite exported over seventy percent of all wool leaving Leith according to both records - although the exchequer roll gives a total export of 8,900 stones and eight pounds.<sup>63</sup> Forty percent of the knithose exported from Leith left under the auspices of only eight of the burgh's merchant princes.<sup>64</sup> All of the salmon and close to eighty percent of the

---

58. SR0, E38/587. The total given is 74,330.

59. Ibid. Total number given is 51,500 lambskins.

60. Ibid. The exchequer roll gives a total of 8,340 footfells.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid. The exchequer roll gives a total of 24,060 ells exported.

63. Ibid.

64. See appendix III.



herring, one of the most important Scottish exports, leaving from Leith that year belonged to only twenty-nine of the mercantile elite. Yet, they managed to export almost double the amount of fish exported by the elite in 1611-2. It would appear that by the mid-1620s the export trade from the capital's port was becoming even more surely ensconced in the hands of a very few rich merchants.

The Leith customs book of 1626-7 gives a list of all goods exported, from that port, together with their customs value, which agrees in all cases except cloth and plaiding with the figures from the exchequer roll for that year.<sup>65</sup> Between 1626 and 1628 only fifty-eight elite merchants altogether were involved in the export trade. In 1626-7 only forty-seven of them sent merchandise out of the country by sea. These men totally dominated what trade there was despite the fact that exporting to French ports was impossible due to the English war with that country, although as late as February 1627 ships left Leith for France.<sup>66</sup> Eighty-two percent of all bear exported that year and all of the wheat, the only cereals leaving Leith, were exported under the auspices of only five of Edinburgh's wealthiest men: Andrew Ainslie, William Dick, John Sinclair, John Sloan and William Wilkie.<sup>67</sup> Most of the grain was exported either to Amsterdam or Campvere, although up to March 1627 some 450 bolls were transported to France. The sharp drop in cereals exported this year and the next, is perhaps

---

65. Ibid.; SR0, E38/594.

66. SR0, E71/29/9, 5 Feb. 1627.

67. Wilkie and Ainslie worked in partnership, exporting 200 bolls of wheat and bear. Dick exported some cereal as the factor of the earl of Melrose. See SR0, E71/29/9. Wilkie was granted a licence to export wheat by the privy council in 1623 (RPC, xiii, 182, 184).

explained by the closure of French ports and lack of grain arriving in Leith from that country which would have been re-exported. Nineteen members of the burgh elite were responsible for the export of thirteen percent of the lambskins leaving Leith. Their share of the export is fairly consistent with the percentage leaving Leith in 1611-2 and 1624-5; nine percent of the footfells; forty-one percent of the sheepskins; twenty-five percent of the goatskins and almost eight percent of the export of hides. If the numbers of skins and hides exported are averaged together, these nineteen men were responsible for a total of almost thirty percent of these goods leaving Leith in 1626-7. According to the Leith customs book just over fifty percent of the cloth and plaiding exported from the port was the responsibility of only seventeen merchants. If the rather lower figure given in the exchequer roll of that year of 24,060 ells of cloth exported is used the elite's share rises to over eighty percent.<sup>68</sup> The explanation for some of the discrepancy between the Leith customs book and the exchequer records may lie in the fact that about 8,000 ells of cloth described as English or as Kendal cotton was amongst that exported by six of the merchants. This cloth would have had custom on it paid upon importing it to Edinburgh and may, therefore, have been excused export tax by the exchequer if it was to be shipped out of the country immediately.<sup>69</sup> The rest of the cloth exported by the elite was the traditional

---

68. SR0, E38/594.

69. See SR0, E71/29/9, 23 July 1627, mentions Kendal cotton imported by James Murray. The inward custom was paid in England. Murray sent English cloth to Campvere, France, Königsberg and Stockholm. See below, pp. 162-3.

Scottish plaiding, the bulk of which, some 13,000 ells, was sent to Campvere. Less than 600 ells of cloth was sent to any other European destination.<sup>70</sup> The elite exported about the same proportion of knithose and gloves as in 1624-5 - the bulk of which was sent to the Staple port. John Kniblo exported 700 pairs of knithose to Campvere in July and September of 1627; John Veitch exported 800 pairs to there in August and October 1627; James Troup sent 1,000 pairs to Elsinore in September of that year and David Murray exported a combined total of 1,100 pairs to France, Stockholm and Campvere between December 1626 and August 1627.<sup>71</sup> Nineteen members of the burgh elite exported over seventy percent of the herring leaving Leith in 1626-7 and almost forty percent of the salmon. The ultimate destination of these cargoes were almost invariably in Scandinavia, the Baltic or France; only two lasts of salmon were bound for Holland; and the entire lot was shipped on no more than seventeen different vessels.<sup>72</sup>

The elite's role in the export trade in 1627-8 continued to be primarily in grain, skins, cloth and fish.<sup>73</sup> Fewer sorts of commodities were exported from Leith in 1627-8. Of the cereals, no oats, bear, rye or peas were exported; no tar or pitch; no knappalds and deals; and no gloves left Leith.

---

70. These were Amsterdam, Flanders and France.

71. SRO, E71/29/9, 28 Dec. 1626, 21 Apr, 6 July, 27 Aug, 15, 19 Sept, 17 Oct. 1627.

72. Ibid., 4, 9, 10, 11, 22 Nov; 6 Dec. 1626; 5, 7 Feb; 21, 24 Apr; 28 July; 10, 19 (twice), 28 Sept; 16, 25 Oct. 1627.

73. See appendix III.



The elite, certainly, limited their trading activities and did not export any of the malt, coal, wool or brass which did leave the burgh. Only thirty-nine members of the elite exported goods by sea in 1627-8 - a drop of almost twenty percent compared to the numbers of elite exporters of the year before. Yet, these men still exported over two-thirds of the grain, a third of the skins and cloth and about half of the fish exported from Edinburgh's port. Four merchants, Alexander Brown, Andrew Ainslie, William Dick and William Wilkie exported the elite's share of cereals from Leith. Brown and Wilkie together exported wheat to Amsterdam in July 1628, and Ainslie exported wheat to Holland that month as well. However, William Dick alone, exported approximately eighty percent of the elite's total wheat shipments or fifty percent of all wheat leaving Leith.<sup>74</sup> Dick exported most of this wheat either to Amsterdam or Rotterdam although he did send 100 bolls to Italy, 20 bolls to Ireland and 300 bolls to Hamburg.<sup>75</sup> Only twenty-three different members of the burgh elite were involved in the export of skins and hides. The bulk of these products, almost a third of all skins and a half of all hides leaving Leith, were bound for Campvere. Otherwise Robert Fleming exported 2,200 goatskins to London; John Hilston exported 4,000 lambskins to Königsberg; John Murray sent over 17,000 lambskins to Königsberg; and David Murray exported over 25,000 lambskins, 3,000 cunningskins and 100 todskins to Königsberg as well as almost 6,000 goat and kidskins

---

74. SRO, E71/29/11, 8 Nov. 1627; 5 Mar; 10 Apr; 12, 23 May; 2, 10, 22, 24 July; 31 Oct. 1638.

75. Ibid., 6 Nov. 1627; 2, 22 July 1628.

to London.<sup>76</sup> Between them John Hilston, John and David Murray accounted for almost all of the elite's exports of lambskins. Thirteen elite merchants exported almost one third of the cloth and plaiding leaving Leith in 1627-8. Except for a combined total of just over 2,000 ells of English cotton exported to Königsberg and Stockholm by James Murray and John Park all cloth and plaiding pertaining to the elite was sent to Campvere - again probably due to the closure to them of French ports.<sup>77</sup> They would be able to ship the cloth from Campvere to European ports thus by-passing the ban on shipping to France.<sup>78</sup> Four members of the elite exported only just over ten percent of the knithose leaving Leith. All of this share ended up in Campvere. Eight members of the elite exported just over fifty percent of the combined total of herring and salmon exported from Edinburgh. William Dick exported eight lasts of herring and sixty barrels of salmon to Italy in November 1627; seven lasts of herring and two lasts of salmon were sent to Campvere and the rest was sent either to Gothenburg, Stockholm or Königsberg.<sup>79</sup> Although there seems to have been a drop in exports in 1627-8 the elite, numbering no more than forty merchants, managed to dominate wheat, grain, skins and cloth which were exported from Leith. The trend in that year differs from 1611-2, when the elite were involved in most of the exports from Leith. This indicates, perhaps, a

---

76. Ibid., 14, 28 Mar; 29 Apr; 15, 22 May; 6, 9 June; 1, 20 July; 19 Aug; 29 Sept. 1628.

77. Ibid., 22 Mar; 8, 19 Apr. 1628.

78. This happened in 1615 when William Little was fined £110 for importing goods to Dunkirk via Campvere (ECA, MSS, ETCR, xii, 21 July 1615).

79. Ibid., 8, 23 Nov, 5 Dec. 1627; 29 Jan; (no date) Aug; 22, 29 Sept; 30 Oct. 1628. On 29 Sept. 1628 Alexander Monteath, Alexander Brown, James Troup, John and David Murray and John Hilston all shared in forty-five lasts sent to Königsberg.

growing trend towards a certain specialization in some commodities on the part of the nation's wealthiest group.

Taken together the import and export lists which survive do indicate that the Edinburgh elite were becoming a select body of no more than 120 men. They managed to dominate the import of cloth, and luxury goods and bring to Leith a major share of what grain was imported. This group exported most of the cloth, skins and grain and a high proportion of manufactured woollen goods such as knithose.<sup>80</sup> Their interests, however, did extend beyond these staple goods. In 1621-2 members of the elite also imported along with the more important goods two dozen silk garters, three pounds of ostrich feathers, eighteen goose pans and a dozen frying pans as well as twenty brushes. The next year they also imported six furred muffs, two dozen leather and a certain amount of figs. Mingled with the other goods imported by the elite were shipments of small amounts of lemons, oil, and leather. The elite imported tobacco to the burgh despite the ban in 1616 on its import and sale.<sup>81</sup> In January 1617, Helen Scarlett, David Jenkin and John Veitch were prosecuted before the privy council for illegally selling tobacco; and John Sloan, William Simpson, Alexander Monteath and Thomas Bannatyne were prosecuted in 1618.<sup>82</sup> Although in 1622 the act forbidding tobacco imports had been re-enacted,

---

80. However, this varied little from the importance of exports in 1614. See Smout, Scottish Trade, 237.

81. RPC, x, 516-9, 659. A tobacco monopoly had been granted to a Captain Murray for twenty-one years. After his death in 1621 the monopoly was re-granted (ibid., xiii, 28-30, 102-4; v, 1633-5, 336-7; vi, 1635-7, 62-3).

82. Ibid., xi, 8, 235-6, 247-8, 357. Scarlett had tobacco in her inventory at the time of her death in 1632 (Edin. Tests, 16 June 1632). Jenkin also had tobacco at the time of his death in 1641 (Edin. Tests, 1 Mar. 1643).



in 1627 both John Bisset and Andrew Purves imported tobacco from England.<sup>83</sup> As late as 1635 five members of the elite were prosecuted for the illegal sale of the 'noxious weed'.<sup>84</sup> However, these sorts of shipments must have been of limited value when compared to the total income generated from trade on the part of the burgh's merchant princes. The fact that these men imported and exported a major share of the goods to and from Leith does argue a considerable knowledge of the market centres of Europe on their part.

It has been written that a typical overseas trader of early seventeenth century Scotland was a man at the whim of fate - prepared to trade with whatever foreign destination the ships of his port were willing to sail to while being disinclined to venture into unknown waters.<sup>85</sup> Certainly an examination of the import and export patterns of the elite has revealed a corps of men transporting goods along well-established routes. Five traditional areas of Scottish trade have been identified. These are: the Baltic; Scandinavia including Denmark and Germany, France, the Netherlands, and England. Yet, each of these areas had their own importance and each required certain skills from the merchants trading with them. Between 1621 and 1623 726 ships arrived at Leith from foreign ports. The burgh elite imported goods on 369, or fifty percent, of them.<sup>86</sup> From August 1636 to November 1639 of a total number of 624 ships docking at Leith the burgh's wealthiest men imported goods on only 190, or thirty percent of them.<sup>87</sup> Between

---

83. SRO, E71/29/10, f.4.

84. RPC, vi, 1635-7, 62-3.

85. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 125, 127.

86. See appendix IV.

87. Ibid.

1621 and 1623 the elite were involved with fifty-six percent of the 114 ships arriving from the Baltic and between 1636 and 1639 with forty-six percent of the seventy-four ships docking from that area. Between 1621-3 the elite's goods arrived on only twenty-five percent of the 106 ships coming from Scandinavia, Denmark and Germany and between 1636 and 1639 on just nineteen percent of the 191 ships coming from that area. Of the 103 ships arriving from French ports between 1621 and 1623 some sixty-three percent carried goods for members of the burgh elite. However, between 1636 and 1639 the elite imported goods on only thirty-four percent of the 175 ships arriving from France. Some 305 ships arrived in Leith from the Low Countries between 1621-3 on fifty-three percent of which the elite imported goods. From August 1636 to November 1639 only 106 ships docked from that area and the elite were involved with only thirty-three percent of these. A total of fifty-eight ships arrived at Leith from England between 1622-3. The burgh elite had goods on fifty-two percent of them. From 1636 to 1639 forty-three ships docked at Leith from English ports and the elite were involved with some forty percent. Of the nineteen ships exporting goods to the Baltic ports between 1611 and 1628 from Leith some sixty-three percent carried the elite's products.<sup>88</sup> Twenty-six ships left Leith for Scandinavia, Denmark and Germany between 1611-2 and 1626-8. The elite shipped goods on fifty-four percent of them. These men exported goods on seventy-seven percent of the combined total of forty-four ships bound for France in 1611-2 and 1626-7. Eighty-seven ships exported goods to the Netherlands from the capital between 1611-2 and 1626-8. The elite exported goods

---

88. See appendix V.

on a third of the seventy-five ships bound for England.

According to the shipping lists a total of sixty-four elite members either imported goods from or exported to Baltic ports. Yet, of this number no more than twenty of them can be considered as regular traders with Baltic ports - shipping to or from that region on more than two occasions. However, it must be stated that between 1621 and 1623, the elite imported cereals from either Danzig, Königsberg or Greifswald almost to the total exclusion of any other of the area's produce or ports. This area had always been regarded as an important granary for Scotland particularly in times of dearth, such as the early 1620s.<sup>89</sup> The forty-four elite merchants not regularly plying the Baltic route were quick to realize the profits to be made by importing grain from the Baltic and this, perhaps, explains their involvement in this area during these years. The twenty elite merchants who imported from the Baltic on a regular basis between 1621 and 1623 imported from these ports between them approximately ten percent of all cereals arriving at Leith from any destination and almost thirty percent of all cereals imported by the elite alone. Yet, these men also imported wax, flax, ash and iron from the region. William Gray imported goods to Leith from the Baltic five times between 1622-3 and also exported herring to Danzig in April 1627;<sup>90</sup> John Hamilton imported wax, iron, hemp and rye on seven occasions between 1622-3;<sup>91</sup> Alexander Brown, perhaps the single most important Baltic trader of the elite,

---

89. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 155-7.

90. SR0, E71/29/7, 13 May 1622; E71/29/8, 10 Nov. 1622 (twice), 22 May, 8 Sept. 1623; E71/29/9, 24 Apr. 1627.

91. SR0, E71/29/7, 16 July, 5, 12, 29 Aug. 16 Sept. 1623; E71/29/8, 5 July, 28 Oct. 1623.



imported a mixture of grain, iron, flax, wanescotting and wax on no fewer than fifteen occasions between May 1622 and September 1623 and also exported fish to the Baltic three times between 1627 and 1628.<sup>92</sup> John Sinclair and James Loch each imported goods from Baltic ports on eight ships between 1622 and 1623.<sup>93</sup> Alexander Monteath and William Wilkie on six ships;<sup>94</sup> and Thomas Winram on five ships.<sup>95</sup> Of those importing regularly from the Baltic in the 1620s only William Gray, Alexander Brown, William Wilkie, James Loch and Walter Thompson still imported from there in the 1630s. The most important of the Baltic traders of the 1630s were Thomas Leishman and John Ronald. Between them they paid duty on 869 tons of goods arriving from the Baltic at Leith between 1636-9, equalling almost twenty percent of the overall Baltic imports.<sup>96</sup> They had not been involved in that area in the 1620s, although Ronald did export lambskins to Königsberg on one occasion in 1627.<sup>97</sup> The Baltic trade was certainly profitable and occasionally led to squabbles between

- 
92. SRO, E71/29/7, 13 May, 26 June, 16 (twice), 31 July, 12, 14, 27, 29 Aug; E71/29/8, 10 Nov, 4, 13 June, 4, 7 July, 8 Sept. 1623; E71/29/9, 24 Apr. 1627; E71/29/11, 22, 29 Sept. 1628. He also imported goods from Königsberg in 1629 (ECA, DGCR, iv, 9 Sept. 1629). At the time of his death in 1642 he had £500 worth of herring in venture to Danzig (Edin. Tests, 14 Feb. 1643).
93. Sinclair: SRO, E71/29/7, 24 June, 16 July, 12, 14 (twice) Aug, 17 Sept. 1622; E71/29/8, 5 June, 5 July 1623. Loch: E71/29/7, 16, 17, 31 July, 14 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 10 Nov. 1622, 29 Apr., 17 June, 19 July 1623.
94. Monteath: SRO, E71/29/7, 26 June, 12, 29 Aug. 1623; E71/29/8, 13 June, 17, 18 Sept. 1623. Wilkie: E71/29/7, 13 May, 26 June, 27, 29 Aug, 1 Oct. 1622; E71/29/8, 17 Sept. 1623.
95. SRO, E71/29/7, 13 May, 26 June, 27, 29 Aug, 1 Oct. 1622; E71/29/8, 17 Sept. 1623. Indeed, Winram died in a shipwreck coming from Königsberg in 1631 (ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 6 July 1631).
96. Leishman: ECA, Merk of the Tun, 3, 17 Oct, 10 Dec. 1636, 16 May, 15 Aug, 23 Sept. (twice), 1637, 9 Apr, 1638, 29 July 1639. Ronald: Merk of the Tun, 10 Aug, 16 Dec. 1636, 27 July 1637, 27 Aug, 1 Sept. 1638, 9, 18, 23 July 1639.
97. SRO, E71/29/9, 22 Oct. 1627.

merchants and agents. In May 1622 James Loch had been commissioned by another member of the elite, Andrew Simpson, to purchase for him either peas or rye in Danzig and transport it back to Leith. Loch arrived in Leith in July 1622 with forty-six lasts of peas and perceiving that the market was at its best he promptly claimed the peas as his own property and sold them for a profit of some £840.<sup>98</sup> Four years later John Ramsay, similarly, sold goods in Leith for his own profit which he had purchased on behalf of another merchant in Königsberg.<sup>99</sup> It would seem that trade with the Baltic ports, and in particular the importing of grain from there, was of major interest to only a handful of the burgh elite, who managed to dominate Edinburgh's trade with the area. The exports to the Baltic, made by the elite were limited to fish and skins and were not of great economic value.<sup>100</sup> Probably because of the volatile nature of the Baltic import trade, based almost entirely on grain, by 1639 the elite's role in it had become almost negligible.<sup>101</sup>

Norway, Sweden and Denmark were an important source of industrial raw materials for Scottish industry. Trade with Norway was particularly important. It was Scotland's chief

---

98. ECA, DGCR, iii, 19 Feb. 1623. He was sued by Simpson and forced to make payment to him. Simpson had been trading to Danzig since 1617. See Edin. Tests, Elizabeth Ellis, 21 July 1618.

99. ECA, DGCR, iv, 1 Nov. 1626. The goods were hemp and tar.

100. This despite the general upsurge in exports to these areas after 1610 (Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 159). Thomas Inglis did extend the Baltic trade beyond its limits selling wine in Moscow in 1615 (ECA, DGCR, iii, 27 Sept. 1615). McMillan, The Edinburgh Burgess Community, 229, states that few of the skins exported overall were going to the Baltic.

101. See appendix IV. The elite's Baltic trade dropped by almost seventy percent over the amount entered by them in 1636-7.

supplier of timber starting from at least the late sixteenth century and remained as such as late as the 1680s.<sup>102</sup> Trade with Sweden also expanded in the seventeenth century; Scots traders imported copper, iron, and timber from there and exported wool and herring to its ports.<sup>103</sup> Yet, trade with Scandinavia was of minimal importance to Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants. Almost 300 ships are recorded as arriving in Leith from Scandinavia but the elite had imports on no more than twenty percent of them.<sup>104</sup> They were more involved in the export trade to this area although not to any great extent.<sup>105</sup> However, the elite's involvement in Scandinavia or Denmark was carried on by only thirty different men. Of these thirty merchants only eleven exported or imported from there more than twice. The goods which these men imported were the traditional wares. John Sinclair imported burnewood and deals from Norway in July 1623,<sup>106</sup> William Gray imported the same sort of materials seven times between June 1622 and July 1623.<sup>107</sup> After 1636 the trade with Scandinavia and Denmark was limited to only a handful of elite merchants, who between them paid duty on 1,320 tuns arriving at Leith from that area - less than twenty percent of the total, and only six of those considered as regular traders

---

102. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 144-7; Smout, Scottish Trade, 154.

103. Ibid., 158-9; Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 152. See also J. Dow, 'Scottish trade with Sweden 1512-80', and 'Scottish trade with Sweden 1580-1622', SHR, xlviii (1969), 64-79, 124-50.

104. See appendix IV.

105. See appendix V.

106. SR0, E71/29/8, 2 July 1623.

107. SR0, E71/29/7, 11 June, 25 July 1622; E71/29/8, 26 May, 15 June, 30 July 1623.



imported thirty percent of the elite's share. The elite's exports were mainly of fish and salt, although a small amount of cloth was exported to Stockholm in April 1627 and a half tun of wine was sent to Norway in April 1612.<sup>108</sup> Thomas Watson, perhaps, was the pre-eminent member of the elite dealing in trade with Scandinavia. In 1622-23 he imported only from Sweden and Denmark - three times from Stockholm, twice from Nylöse and once from 'Salisbury' in Denmark.<sup>109</sup> He imported iron, tar and some grain. He also exported fish, salt and gloves to Stockholm in April 1627; fish there again in September 1627 and salt again in April 1628.<sup>110</sup> Watson had been trading with Sweden as early as 1611 when he wrote asking King James to use his influence on Watson's behalf in a dispute with James's brother-in-law, the king of Denmark, who had stopped Watson's ships which had been sailing through the Danish Sound Toll with 7,000 dollars worth of wood from Nylöse.<sup>111</sup> Watson was also involved in 1617 in a dispute over payment for a ship which he had chartered to sail to Sweden.<sup>112</sup> Scottish trade with Sweden was of sufficient importance to its king to nominate Hercules Cramond as his factor in Edinburgh in 1618.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless,

---

108. SRO, E71/29/6, 21 Apr. 1612, sent by William Gray; E71/29/9, 21 Apr. 1627, sent by Thomas Winram.

109. SRO, E71/29/7, 29 June, 9 July, 1, 17 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 19 June, 4 Sept. 1623.

110. SRO, E71/29/9, 21 Apr, 28 Sept. 1627; E71/29/11, 8 Apr. 1628.

111. RPC, ix, 620; NLS, Denmilne MSS, 33.3.1, vol. 8. The wood was for the building of Greyfriars church. The dispute was unresolved in 1618 (RPC, xi, 628-9). Watson was not the only merchant stopped by the Danes. See also ibid, xii, 77, 217-9.

112. ECA, DGCR, iii, 28 Jan. 1618.

113. Edin. Tests, 23 Jan. 1619. Adam Finlayson was owed £1,800 by the king of Sweden or his factor, Hercules Cramond. There is no record of Cramond being directly involved in Scottish trade.

trade with Scandinavia and Denmark was of limited importance to the burgh's wealthiest merchants during the first forty years of the century and by 1639 they imported no more than a combined total of 150 tons of goods from Norway, Denmark or Sweden.<sup>114</sup>

Prior to the union of the crowns French ports had proved a lucrative source of trade for Scottish merchants. It has been suggested, however, that the basis of this intimacy was irrevocably changed early in the seventeenth century both by the union of 1603 and the civil and religious disruptions within France. The combination of these events left Franco-Scottish trade of almost negligible importance to Scottish merchants by 1630.<sup>115</sup> French trade had been such an important source of income to Edinburgh's merchants that in 1604 permission had been granted by the king to elect the burgh magistrates a week after Michaelmas as the town's merchants were busy with the French wine trade in October.<sup>116</sup> In 1605, two of the burgh's wealthiest merchants were commissioned by the Convention of Royal Burghs to travel to France to deal with trading affairs between the two countries.<sup>117</sup> As late as 1612 William Speir advanced money to finance the sending of a commission to France in order to confirm Scots trading privileges there and

---

114. See appendix II.

115. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 166-71; Smout, Scottish Trade, 167. All French goods in Scotland were seized in 1627 due to the war (RPC, ii, 1627-8, 116-7).

116. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 6-7.

117. They were Thomas Fisher and William Speir. See ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 21 Aug. 1605.

was in return granted the right to uplift a special levy on all goods arriving in Leith from Normandy.<sup>118</sup> In 1617 William Nisbet, provost of the burgh, complained to the Scots factor in Dieppe that English foreign policy was harmful to Scottish trade and that Scots should keep to the 'Auld Alliance'.<sup>119</sup> France provided Scots merchants with such conventional goods as grain, salt and dye-stuffs, but also with such luxury goods as textiles, haberdashery, and, above all, wine. The traditional ports visited by Scottish merchants changed little in the early years of the seventeenth century.<sup>120</sup> The north-west ports of Normandy, Dieppe, Calais and Rouen figured largely although their trade was of secondary importance to that of the Bordeaux wine route and commerce with La Rochelle. The burgh elite were more likely to be involved in trade with French ports than with either the Baltic or Scandinavia. A total of eighty-two of the burgh's wealthiest merchants traded with France between 1611 and 1639 according to the surviving customs records. Of this total, however, thirty-three men only imported goods; twenty-eight solely exported produce to France and only twenty-one merchants were involved in both aspects of trade. Indeed, if those merchants involved only with the seasonal wine trade with Bordeaux after 1636 were to be discounted the total number of traders would drop considerably.<sup>121</sup> From

---

118. ECA, DGCR, iii, 20 Feb. 1617. This was granted in March 1612. See NLS, Denmilne MSS, 33.1.1, vol. 4, no. 4.

119. Ibid., 33.1.1, vol. 6, no. 18.

120. See appendix IV, V.

121. Wine ships were not listed in the import lists of 1621-3.



1636-9 twenty-five elite members paid duty at Leith on 3,581 tons from Bordeaux alone although there is no guarantee that all of this was paid for wine.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless no more than thirty-four merchants could be considered as the core of the Edinburgh elite trading regularly with France.

Amongst the most important of these French traders was Peter Blackburn. Between 1621 and 1623 he only imported goods from France. Ships carrying his goods arrived from Newhaven three times, from Rouen three times, from Dieppe three times during these years and from Bordeaux once in 1636.<sup>123</sup> He was mainly concerned with importing fancy goods to Leith. Between 1621-3 he brought in 284 reams of paper - twenty percent of all paper imported by the elite; seven and a half barrels of honey; twenty-four dozen candles, ninety dozen pots, twenty-eight pounds of silk as well as taffetta, serge, buckram and a cloth called 'drap-de-berrie'. Blackburn had also exported eight daikers of hides to Newhaven in France as early as 1611.<sup>124</sup> John Fleming imported from France five times between 1621 to 1623; his goods arrived on three of the same vessels as Blackburn's.<sup>125</sup> Fleming imported similar sorts of goods to Blackburn - 151 pounds of silk, cloth, pots, plumdames as well as 104 reams of paper. Between 1637 and 1638 he paid duty on a total of 195 tuns of goods from Bordeaux and La Rochelle.<sup>126</sup>

---

122. See appendix II.

123. SR0, E71/29/7, 1 Jan, 1 Apr, 17 June (twice), 22 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 6 Dec, 17 Feb, 26 Mar, 29 May, 13 June 1623; ECA, Merk of the Tun, 10 Nov. 1636.

124. SR0, E71/29/6, 31 Oct. 1611.

125. SR0, E71/29/7, 18 Mar, 17 June 1622 (twice); E71/29/8, 17 Feb. 29 May 1623.

126. ECA, Merk of the Tun, 4 Apr, 17 June 1637, 3 Jan. 1638.

Fleming was also involved in exporting to France. In February 1612 he sent four daikers of hides to Newhaven in France; in November 1626 he sent two packs of raisins to Newhaven, three lasts of herring to Bordeaux; and in March 1627 he exported 1,800 skins to Calais.<sup>127</sup> At the time of his death in 1642 he had sent £2,000 worth of goods to Bordeaux.<sup>128</sup> Lawrence Henderson also imported from France with Fleming and Blackburn. In June 1622 he imported silk, cloth, paper and pots on two ships from Newhaven with them.<sup>129</sup> He again imported similar sorts of goods twice in May 1623 from Rouen with them.<sup>130</sup> Henderson exported hides to Dieppe in 1612 and English cloth to Newhaven in November 1626.<sup>131</sup> He was a regular traveller to France and in November 1615 had even been commissioner by Archibald Noble, another member of the elite, to deliver 100 French crowns to Noble's factor in Dieppe in order to exchange them into Scots currency.<sup>132</sup> Alan Livingston imported goods from La Rochelle in April 1622 and February 1623.<sup>133</sup> Both times he brought home only salt, almost 600 bolls in total. In addition to this he also exported two lasts of herring to Dieppe in February 1627.<sup>134</sup> David Murray imported foodstuffs

---

127. SRO, E71/29/6, 6 Feb. 1612; E71/29/9, 10, 22 Nov. 1626, 28 Mar. 1627.

128. Edin. Tests, 15 June 1642.

129. SRO, E71/29/7, 17 June 1622 (twice).

130. SRO, E71/29/8, 29 May 1623 (twice).

131. SRO, E71/29/6, 11 May 1612; E71/29/9, 10 Nov. 1626.

132. ECA, DGCR, iii, 15 May 1616. Henderson failed to pay this money to Noble after his return. The total was £360.

133. SRO, E71/29/7, 29 Apr. 1622; E71/29/8, 10 Feb. 1623.

134. SRO, E71/29/9, 5 Feb. 1627.

and cloth from Calais; beans, peas, bear and oats in July 1622; cloth in August; raisins and apples in November; raisins, beans and plumdames in January 1623; beans again in March, oats and bear in June; and peas, beans, bear, oats and cloth twice in July of that year.<sup>135</sup> He also exported wax to Calais in August 1611 and to Bordeaux in September of that year.<sup>136</sup> In August 1626 he exported salmon to Newhaven; herring in November to Bordeaux; and knithose to Newhaven in December of 1626.<sup>137</sup> Archibald Noble, who had made use of a factor in Dieppe since at least 1615, imported vinegar, pots and dyestuff from there in August 1622 as well as nine pieces of Florentine serge in February 1623, both times on ships which also carried goods for Peter Blackburn.<sup>138</sup> John Sloan also imported paper from Newhaven in June 1622 with these men, and had also brought a cargo of raisins and salt from Calais in April of that year.<sup>139</sup> William Spier exported a mixture of wax, coal, lead and hides to Newhaven in October 1611 and February 1612.<sup>140</sup> His widow continued the family connection with France, although she imported only from Rouen, bringing in vinegar, paper, pots and honey three times after January 1622.<sup>141</sup>

---

135. SRO, E71/29/7, 11 July, 2 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 15 Nov. 1622, 21 Jan, 28 Mar, 27 June, 7 July (twice), 1623.

136. SRO, E71/29/6, 13 Aug, 27 Sept. 1611.

137. SRO, E71/29/9, 10, 22 Nov, 28 Dec. 1626.

138. SRO, E71/29/7, 22 Aug 1622; E71/29/8, 17 Feb. 1623.  
See above, n. 132.

139. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 Apr, 17 June 1622. He also imported salt from France in 1623 (E71/29/8, 22 Mar, 21 Oct. 1623).

140. SRO, E71/29/6, 1 Oct. 1611, 6 Feb. 1612.

141. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 Jan, 1 Apr. 1622; E71/29/8, 29 May 1623.



John Trotter imported in 1622-3 goods from a mixture of French ports - from Calais nine times between February 1622 and July 1623, from Caen in March and again in June 1622, and from La Rochelle in July 1623.<sup>142</sup> His goods included hemp, paper, plumdames, cloth, salt and cereals. He exported skins and herring to Newhaven, Dieppe and Calais late in 1626 and early in 1627.<sup>143</sup> By 1630 Trotter was also involved in importing wine from Bordeaux and exporting knithose to there. In addition to this investment he also had sent over £1,100 worth of worset hose to Paris.<sup>144</sup>

Paris had become an important market place for members of the burgh elite by <sup>the</sup>early seventeenth century. As early as 1612 Robert Acheson had established a market for his goods in that city.<sup>145</sup> By 1614 a Scots factor, Edward Little, was working for the elite in Paris.<sup>146</sup> At least two more factors representing elite merchants, Andrew Beaton and John Clerk, were well established in Paris by 1630, and a great deal of goods were trans-shipped to that city from Bordeaux or Dieppe. John Smith, Patrick Wood, John Trotter, Robert Inglis, John Dougal, James Nasmith, Lawrence Henderson and James Murray

---

142. SRO, E71/29/7, 9 Feb, 5 Mar, 7 May, 8 June, 2 Aug 1622; E71/29/8, 21 Jan, 22, 28 Mar, 20 May, 27 June, 7 July (twice), 22 July 1623.

143. SRO, E71/29/9, 28 Dec. 1626, 5 Feb, 28 Mar, 1627. He also exported herring to Bordeaux in 1611 (E71/29/6, 31 Oct. 1611). Trotter exported goods to Calais on 28 Mar. 1627. He sent six other merchants goods under his name and was forced to sue them for non-payment of their freight charges. See ECA, DGCR, iv, 4 Feb. 1629.

144. Edin. Tests, Janet McMath, 18 Mar. 1631.

145. ECA, DGCR, iii, 31 May 1615.

146. Ibid., iii, 25 Jan. 1615.

all made use of this connection with the French capital.<sup>147</sup>

Indeed, when John Dougal's son was due to visit Paris in 1636 Dougal begged his factor to look after him.<sup>148</sup> Certainly, the elite had also well established factors in Dieppe, La Rochelle and, above all, Bordeaux.<sup>149</sup> This city was of crucial interest to all the Scottish merchants, and to the elite in particular, for it was from there that most of the wine arriving in Scotland was imported. From 1610 to 1625 at least 1,000 tuns of French wine alone were sold in Leith.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, the town council kept a strict control of wine sales collecting special taxes for the town's use upon its sale in 1609, 1612 and 1613.<sup>151</sup> The impost of custom of wine was, however, generally set in tack, in 1602 to James Nisbet and James Dalzell; and in 1613 a five year tack of the wine customs was granted to a consortium consisting of William Murray, Ninian McMorran, James Arnot and Michael Finlayson, amongst others.<sup>152</sup> A tax of £21 charged on every tun of wine brought in to Edinburgh after October 1602 prompted complaints by a group of elite merchants, led by Mr. Nicol Brown, that the custom was to be

---

147. SRO, GD 7/2/34; GD 18/2361; GD 18/2368/40; GD 30/1189.

148. SRO, GD 18/2380/10.

149. For a discussion of factors see below, pp. 203-13.

150. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 339-41. This may be a record of Leith wine alone and not of wine arriving in Edinburgh proper. In 1621 Leith collected sixty-four percent of the total wine imposts of Scotland (Murray, 'The customs accounts of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright' 1560-1660', 120).

151. Edin. Recs, 1604-26, 57, 89, 113.

152. Ibid., 1589-1603, 307; 1604-26, 103; RPC, vi, 426. See also SRO, CS7/279, 24 July 1613. Finlayson was an importer of wine from Bordeaux (ECA, DGCR, iii, 17 May 1613).

paid whether or not the barrels were full and no account had been taken for leakage or spoilage during the voyage.<sup>153</sup>

From 1618 to 1629 the exchequer rolls reveal that an average of £55,000 was collected as customs on wine arriving at Leith although this dropped to just over £30,000 in 1627 and 1628 due to the English war with France.<sup>154</sup>

From November 1629 William Dick purchased the tack of wine customs for which he paid 112,000 marks per annum and which he held until at least 1638.<sup>155</sup> Therefore,

it is impossible to speculate with any degree of accuracy on the total amount of wine arriving at Leith in any one year from 1600 to 1638.<sup>156</sup>

Between November 1635 and November 1636 members of the Edinburgh elite alone sold within the burgh at least 1,000 puncheons of French wine as well as thirty-two butts of sack.<sup>157</sup>

A group of elite merchants were involved regularly in the wine trade within the burgh. Andrew Ainslie, John Sloan, David Murray, Lawrence Henderson and David Jenkin were prominent amongst the members of the elite selling wine to the nobility in 1628.<sup>158</sup>

Andrew Ainslie left wine worth almost £8,000 in his cellar in Leith at the time of his death in 1643; and Jenkin also left

---

153. RPC, vi, 426, 513-4. They did not succeed in their case.

154. SRO, E38/568, 571, 575, 578, 581, 587, 590, 593, 596.

155. RPC, v, 1633-5, 305-15.

156. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 178, states that half a million gallons were imported per annum.

157. ECA, Compt. of French Wine fra 1 Nov. 1635 to 1 Nov. 1636.

158. SRO, E75/30. Nobles were exempt from paying an impost on wine, therefore a separate record was kept of sales of wine to them. See RPC, vii, 1638-43, 356.



wine in his cellar in 1641.<sup>159</sup> Alexander Brown imported £2,000 worth of wine to Leith from Bordeaux in 1630, and £600 worth in 1637.<sup>160</sup> Thomas Charters regularly sold wine from 1619 until at least 1631.<sup>161</sup> In addition to his merchandising John Lands ran a tavern which he supplied in 1616 with wine brought in from France.<sup>162</sup> Alan Livingston had almost £2,500 worth of Bordeaux wine in a cellar in Leith at the time of his death in 1632.<sup>163</sup> Andrew Purves regularly acted as a wine merchant having both French and Spanish wine in his cellars in 1609 and French wine and sack in them in 1632.<sup>164</sup> Thomas Inglis imported wine from Bordeaux in 1627 and in 1634.<sup>165</sup> He had been a wine importer from at least 1607 when he complained to the privy council about the amount of custom charged upon his wine.<sup>166</sup> Certainly his importing of wine in 1627 and the licence granted in February 1627 to Mr. James Strachan to sell his French wine implies that Scots merchants were able to evade the ban on trade with France.<sup>167</sup> This is not to imply that any of these men were solely devoted to the wine trade. Most of them regarded it as a profitable but

---

159. Edin. Tests, 25 July 1648; 1 Mar. 1643.

160. ECA, DGCR, iv, 7 July 1630, 30 Aug. 1637.

161. Ibid., iii, 20 Feb. 1622; iv, 8 June 1631.

162. Ibid., iii, 30 June 1616.

163. Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633.

164. Edin. Tests, Marion Cramond, 29 Jan. 1609; Isabelle Wilkie, 30 Oct. 1632. In Wilkie's testament wine is the only merchandise mentioned.

165. RPC, i, 1625-27, 570; ECA, DGCR, iv, 16 Apr. 1614.

166. This wine was from the Canary Islands. See RPC, viii, 24.

167. Ibid., i, 1625-27, 527-8, 540. This belies the idea that the wine trade was abandoned between 1626 and 1628 (McMillan, *A Study of the Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 223).

seasonal trade which formed no more than a branch of their business activities. It has been shown that the first forty years of the seventeenth century were the boom years for wine consumption within Edinburgh even rivalling the amounts sold in the 1680s and 1690s.<sup>168</sup> The elite were to the fore in this trade and were well able to supply the increasing demands of the ever more sophisticated palates of a thirsty Edinburgh bourgeoisie.

Trade further to the south of France - with Spain, the Canary Islands and the Mediterranean - was not totally unknown to members of the elite prior to 1638 but was of limited importance. Spain's Catholicism and its Inquisition had proven a sore point with Scottish merchants and the Convention of Royal Burghs had banned all direct trade in 1593. It has been suggested that after 1603 Scottish trade with the Iberian peninsula actually blossomed due to the use of Scottish ships by English merchants, who were forbidden to <sup>openly</sup> trade with Spain, and that Scottish merchants failed sufficiently to exploit this opportunity due to their over-cautious attitudes to adventuring into new markets.<sup>169</sup> There is, certainly, meagre evidence of direct and extensive trading links with Spain, Portugal or the Mediterranean. At least eighteen elite merchants had trading connections with Spain, dealing with Bilbao, Cadiz and the Canaries. As early as 1607 Thomas Inglis imported wine to

---

168. Ibid., 207-8.

169. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 186-8. Smout, Scottish Trade, 172-3. Donaldson, James V - VII, 248-9. Scottish trade was disrupted by Anglo-Spanish hostilities in the 1620s (RPC, 1, 1625-27, 430-2).

Leith from the Canary Islands despite his complaining that '... Canary is not as good as sack ... and [that] there [was] far greater hazard in bringing home Canary...'.<sup>170</sup> Andrew Purves had twelve tuns of Spanish wine in his cellar upon his wife's death in 1609, and Ninian McMorranne paid impost on four tuns of Spanish wine arriving at Leith in December of the same year.<sup>171</sup> McMorranne exported twenty-five chalders of coal to Spain in September 1611 in partnership with Alexander McMath.<sup>172</sup> John Sloan chartered the 'Marie' or 'Marjorie' of Leith in 1619 to sail to Plymouth and then on to Cadiz, which ship was however attacked by Turkish pirates.<sup>173</sup> Archibald Downie imported wine from Cadiz in 1620.<sup>174</sup> Archibald Tod exported £1,200 worth of wax to Spain in 1623, and that same year Mr. James Strachan exported goods to Bilbao under condition that the ship was to put into Bordeaux to load up on the return leg of the voyage.<sup>175</sup> Alan Livingston died in 1632, leaving £3,325 worth of Spanish wine, as well as a debt for freight of the wine, in his cellar in addition to over £800 worth of goods in venture to Spain and £88 worth of Spanish cloth brought from Spain.<sup>176</sup> The late 1630s saw a slight boom in Spanish trade.

---

170. Ibid., viii, 24.

171. Edin. Tests, Marion Cramond, 3 Jan. 1610; SRO, GO 135/124/3/29.

172. SRO, E71/29/6, 27 Sept. 1611. This is the only evidence of McMath exporting to Spain but McMorranne had been exporting to Spain from at least 1605 (RPC, vii, 36).

173. ECA, DGCR, iii, 7 Mar. 1621.

174. Ibid., iii, 17 Jan. 1621.

175. Edin. Tests, Helen Jackson, 12 Nov. 1623; ECA, DGCR, iv, 23 June 1624.

176. Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633.



John Dougal exported salmon to Bilbao in 1637, cloth to Cadiz in 1638, and even had his own factor in Bilbao.<sup>177</sup>

John Penman exported cloth to Cadiz in September 1636, and cloth, wax and knappalds to there in September 1638.<sup>178</sup>

John Cunningham exported wax and knappalds to Cadiz in September 1637.<sup>179</sup>

Robert Fleming and James Murray paid duty on 220 tons of goods arriving at Leith from Spain in March 1637 and May 1638.<sup>180</sup>

Patrick Wood had the immense sum of £10,500 worth of goods being shipped to Spain at the time of his death in 1638, as well as almost £800 worth bound to the Canaries.<sup>181</sup>

John Fleming had £5,000 worth of goods en route to Spain when he died in 1642.<sup>182</sup>

Connections with other Mediterranean countries on the part of the elite are, however, less evident, although William Dick did export a mixture of herring, salmon, wax, lead and wheat to either Leghorn or Venice in 1627 and exported coal and wax to Leghorn ten years later.<sup>183</sup> It would appear that trade with Spain was becoming more attractive to the burgh elite by 1636. However, it clearly remained of secondary interest to them and never attracted the attention of more than a handful of

---

177. SRO, GD 18/2380/31; GD 18/2/5; GD 18/2/9. The cloth was exported with Peter Blackburn.

178. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 23 Sept. 1636, 7 Sept. 1638.

179. Ibid., xiv, 27 Sept. 1637.

180. ECA, Merk of the Tun, 7 Mar. 1637, 12 May 1638.

181. Edin. Tests, 22 Mar. 1639, 6 Mar, 10 Sept. 1640.

182. Edin. Tests, 15 June 1642.

183. SRO, E71/29/11, 8 Nov. 1627; ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 1 Sept. 1637. David Wilkie, not an elite member, also exported to Leghorn in 1637. See ibid., xiv, 6 Oct. 1637.

the wealthiest men of the town.

It has been written that the history of Scottish-Dutch connections is nothing less than the history of Scottish trade.<sup>184</sup> In the first twenty years of the seventeenth century Scottish trade with Dutch ports - and in particular with the Scottish staple port of Campvere in the Walcheren - was the dominant factor behind Scottish overseas commercial life.<sup>185</sup> A total of 305 vessels arrived in Leith from Dutch ports between 1621 and 1623, forty-two percent of all ships docking at the port.<sup>186</sup> Between 1611-2 and 1626-8 eighty-seven ships exported goods to Dutch ports from Edinburgh, thirty-three percent of all vessels leaving Leith.<sup>187</sup> However, from 1636 to 1639 only 106 ships arrived from the Low Countries, less than seventeen percent of all ships entering Leith.<sup>188</sup> These ships brought in only 2,472 tons of goods - about nine percent of all tonnage arriving in the port. According to the only customs lists surviving for the forty years in question, eighty-four of the burgh's wealthiest men either imported or exported goods to the Low Countries; thirty-six merchants only imported from there; twenty only exported to Holland and twenty-eight were involved in both branches of the trade. Evidence from other sources does raise the number of elite merchants using Dutch ports although not by any significant level. Probably no more than 100 elite merchants made use of any of the Netherland's

---

184. J. Davidson and A. Gray, The Scottish Staple at Veere (1909), 113. This is quoting Cosmo Innes.

185. See M.P. Rooseboom, The Scottish Staple in the Netherlands, (The Hague, 1910); A.W.K. Stevenson, Trade between Scotland and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages (unpublished University of Aberdeen Ph.D, 1982).

186. See appendix IV.

187. See appendix V.

188. See appendix II.

ports.<sup>189</sup> Certainly the ports visited by the elite seem at first glance to confirm the hold which the traditional area of the Staple port had on Edinburgh's trade. Of the 305 ships arriving at Leith from the Netherlands 162, some fifty-three percent, came from Campvere but sixty-nine vessels arrived from Amsterdam, sixty-five from Rotterdam, and fifty-five from Middelburg; indicating that a real shift had taken place away from the Staple port. It was all the more significant that forty-four percent of the ships plying the Dutch trade routes came from the most important commercial centres of Europe - Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Between 1611-2 and 1626-8 eighty-seven vessels left Leith for Dutch ports. Thirty-six, some forty-one percent, were bound for Campvere; nine, only ten percent, left directly for Amsterdam; and a mere five, or six percent, went directly to Rotterdam. The elite exported goods on over ninety percent of the ships bound for the staple port and on all of the ships bound for Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The elite never abandoned Campvere, the commercial incentives and advantages of using the port were still attractive, but they were attempting to diversify their interests in Holland directly to its economic heartland.<sup>190</sup>

The goods imported to or exported from Dutch ports in the early seventeenth century differed remarkably little from the goods in which Edinburgh merchants dealt one or two centuries before. The Dutch ports provided Scottish merchants with a varied choice of

---

189. This does equal almost sixty percent of all merchants involved in overseas trade in any one year if one accepts McMillan's figures of 170 overseas traders. See above, p. 113. n. 35.

190. It has been proven that even in the fourteenth century Scottish merchants evaded having to pay custom duties at Campvere by shifting a large percentage of these goods on to lighters and transporting them to other Dutch cities (Stevenson, *Trade Between Scotland and the Low Countries*, 202-03, 205-06.



luxury and manufactured goods; cloth, dyes, spices; and were as well an important source of foodstuffs, not only cereals but more mundane items such as apples and onions. In exchange for these goods Scottish merchants sailed to the Low Countries with skins; woollen cloth and plaiding; fish, both herring and salmon; and coal.<sup>191</sup> Amongst the privileges granted at Campvere to Scottish merchants was included a special, lower rate charged on the import to that town from Scotland of such goods as sheepskins, ox or cowhides, deerskins, plaiding, salmon, oil, tallow, lead ore, wool, bear and wheat.<sup>192</sup> In return Scots merchants were forbidden to transport these sorts of goods to any other Dutch port. There was, however, a growing dissatisfaction with this arrangement indicated as early as 1610 when the privy council felt compelled to issue a proclamation forbidding the transport of staple goods to any Low Country port other than Campvere.<sup>193</sup> Indeed, the following year a committee was set up by the Convention of Royal Burghs to examine the possibility of shifting the staple from Campvere to Middelburg, although eventually nothing came of this.<sup>194</sup> The dissatisfaction

---

191. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 238, 243.

192. Middelburg Archives, MSS. no. 1293, Toll Payit of Merchandise Coming from Scotland. This manuscript has no date. The rate charged may have changed periodically.

193. RPC, ix, 39-40; RCRB, ii, 298.

194. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xii, 15 Mar. 1611, of its eight members seven were members of the elite; RCRB, ii, 314. A shift of the Staple had been suggested as early as 1599, Davidson and Gray, The Scottish Staple at Veere, 191. There were attempts to shift the Staple again in 1629, RCRB, i, 301; Davidson and Gray, The Scottish Staple at Veere, 200.

felt by Scots traders at being forced to use the Staple port is perhaps indicated by the number of Scottish ships arriving at the rival Walcheren port of Middelburg.<sup>195</sup> From 1600 to 1639 at least 386 Scottish ships docked at Middelburg rather than at Campvere. Some 254 of these were registered between 1626 and 1639 alone. The Middelburg records give an indication from 1626 onwards of the numbers of Scots ships docking at Vlissingen and Campvere as well. While Campvere still dominated trade, some 390 Scottish ships docking between 1626 and 1639, 146 Scottish ships arrived at Vlissingen and if the total numbers of Middelburg and Vlissingen are combined more Scottish ships arrived at these two ports than at the Staple port. While the evidence available to study the Dutch trade on the part of the burgh elite supports the idea that trade was carried on in the traditional wares it does in particular bear out the growing awareness of the deficiencies of using Campvere felt by Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants and their desire to alter this state of affairs by developing contacts in other Dutch cities.

The import lists for 1621-3 and 1636-9 do indeed indicate the strong position held by Campvere on the trade of the elite.<sup>196</sup> Yet, they also reveal that a substantial amount of Dutch trade was carried on with other Netherlands ports. Of the elite merchants who imported goods from Dutch ports more than twice during these years only three - Archibald Noble, James Inglis and John Fleming -

---

195. All information from Middelburg Archives, MSS, Rekenkamer B, 3924-58, which lists Scottish ships arriving at Campvere, Middelburg and Vlissingen 1599-1639.

196. See appendix II, IV.



imported exclusively from Campvere. Noble imported a small quantity of alum and spices; Inglis alum, medop and cloth and Fleming also imported alum as well as beans and oats.<sup>197</sup> A hard core of merchants importing from Campvere did exist but they habitually traded with other Dutch ports as well.

John Veitch imported goods such as hemp, aniseed, liquorice, wine, almond, sugar and grain from Campvere on seven occasions between 1621 and 1623, but he also brought fifteen lasts of bear, eighty barrels of onions, sugar, currants, pepper, and over 300 pounds of alum from Middelburg on five different ships.<sup>198</sup> By 1628 he had established links with Rotterdam and owed over £2,000 for goods to merchants in Middelburg, £200 to merchants in Amsterdam and £286 to the widow of Lawrence Vanham in Haarlem.<sup>199</sup> George Suttie imported cloth, as well as grain and sweetmeats from Campvere on sixteen different vessels between 1621 and 1623.<sup>200</sup> He also imported cloth and grain from Amsterdam on three ships; imported twenty-one lasts of beans from Rotterdam on two vessels and brought ten lasts of beans from Vlissingen in March 1623.<sup>201</sup> At the time of his wife's death in 1627 he was owed £2,100 by his factor in Campvere, yet he owed at least £12,500, some thirty percent of all his debts, to merchants in Middelburg.<sup>202</sup> John Ritchie

---

197. Noble: SRO, E71/29/7, 6 Feb, 21 Sept. 1622; E71/29/8, 24 May 1623. Inglis: E71/29/7, 2 Nov. 1621, 2, 13 Apr. 1622. Fleming: E71/29/8, 10 Mar, 2 June, 9 July, 1 Sept. 1623. Fleming and Noble were also involved in the French and Baltic trade routes. Inglis was owed money in Middelburg by Dutch merchants in 1622. See Edin. Tests, 2 Jan 1623.

198. SRO, E71/29/7, 4, 7 June, 10 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 22 Mar, 24 Apr, 21 Aug, 1 Sept. 1623 from Campvere. E71/29/7, 8 Aug 1622; E71/29/8, 7 Aug, 20 Sept, 24 Oct. 1623 from Middelburg.

199. Edin. Tests, Katherine Hope, 11 Dec. 1628.

200. SRO, E71/29/7, 2 Apr. (twice), 16, 21 May, 3, 4 June, 8 (twice), 9 July 1622; E71/29/8, 27 Dec. 1622, 24, 26 May (twice), 2 June, 14 July 1623.

201. SRO, E71/29/7, 25 May, 1 June, 17 Aug 1622 from Amsterdam. E71/29/8, 3, 9 June 1623 from Rotterdam. E71/29/8, 26 Mar 1623 from Vlissingen.

202. Edin. Tests, Marion Blyth, 20 Feb. 1628.



imported hemp, alum, hops, dye, grain and oil from Campvere nine different times from 1621 to 1623.<sup>203</sup> At the time of his death in 1632 he had over 1,000 sheepskins in store at Campvere and was owed almost £300 by his factor there.<sup>204</sup> He also imported dye, alum and pots from Middelburg in June 1622 as well as four and a half lasts of cereals from Amsterdam the following May.<sup>205</sup> John Kniblo imported goods including hemp, spices, sugar, aniseed, dye and dates from Campvere seventeen times between 1621 and 1623 - but he also imported raisins, cloth, sugar and dyes from Amsterdam twice and sugar candy on a ship from Middelburg.<sup>206</sup> Charles Hamilton imported goods from Campvere no fewer than twelve times between the same years.<sup>207</sup> He dealt in cloves, hemp, sword-blades, grain and raisins. In 1640, he was owed by his factor in Campvere over £1,200 for iron.<sup>208</sup> Yet, he also imported cloth and grain from Middelburg and Vlissingen on a total of five occasions.<sup>209</sup> James Cochrane imported hemp, wire, dyes and beans from the Staple port on five different ships during the early 1620s.<sup>210</sup>

---

203. SRO, E71/29/7, 2 Nov. 1621, 6 Feb, 2 Apr, 21 May, 4 June, 9 July 1622; E71/29/8, 26 May, 7 July, 1 Sept. 1623.

204. Edin. Tests, 4 Sept. 1632.

205. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 June 1622; E71/29/8, 24 May 1623.

206. SRO, E71/29/7, 8 Dec. 1621, 3 Jan, 2 Apr. (twice), 19, 21 May, 3 June, 8 July, 10 (twice), 20 Aug, 2, 12 Sept. 1622; E71/29/8, 18, 21 Nov. 1622, 24 Feb, 10 Mar, 18, 26 May, 2, 25 June, 6 Aug, 1 Sept (twice), 24 Oct. 1623.

207. SRO, E71/29/7, 2 Nov. 1621, 3 Jan, 13 Apr, 8 July, 15 Aug 1622; E71/29/8, 18 Nov, 27 Dec. 1622, 17 Feb, 5, 10, 22 Mar (twice) 1623.

208. Edin. Tests, 27 Mar. 1640.

209. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 May, 18 July 1622; E71/29/8, 22 Mar, 17 Apr. 1623.

210. SRO, E71/29/7, 8 Dec. 1621, 2 Apr, 8 July 1622; E71/29/8, 26 Dec. 1622, 4 July 1623.

He also had lucrative business connections in Middelburg – importing dyestuffs and sugar from there in February and October 1623 as well as in Amsterdam from where he imported beans and bear in May 1623.<sup>211</sup> In 1617 he owed over £500 to merchants in Middelburg and only £350 in Campvere.<sup>212</sup> Ten years later all of the £1,163 which he owed for merchandise was to be paid to merchants in Middelburg.<sup>213</sup>

There did exist, however, a group of elite merchants importing goods from the Netherlands between 1621 and 1623 who almost exclusively dealt with ports other than Campvere. William Wilkie imported a total of twelve times from Rotterdam and Amsterdam, twice from Middelburg and not once from Campvere.<sup>214</sup> His interests in Rotterdam and Amsterdam were mostly in the grain trade although he did import a small amount of sugar and drugs from there. John Sinclair's only ventures into Dutch markets was to import a total of twenty-one lasts of bear and beans from Rotterdam on three occasions in 1623.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, Andrew Purves imported only cereals from Middelburg, Amsterdam and Rotterdam on seven different ships in 1622 and 1623.<sup>216</sup> While Alexander Monteath did have business transactions in Campvere, he was more involved with the grain trade from Amsterdam and Rotterdam – importing from there on six vessels.<sup>217</sup> William Dick imported eleven times from

---

211. Ibid., 24 Feb, 24 May, 24 Oct. 1623.

212. Edin. Tests, Isabelle McNaught, 18 Feb. 1618.

213. Edin. Tests, Bessie Alexander, 16 Oct. 1627.

214. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 May (twice), 17 June, 1, 8 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 22 Mar. (twice), 4 (twice), 15, 17, 25 Apr, 24 May, 15 Aug. 1623.

215. Ibid., 22 Mar. (twice), 23 July 1623.

216. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 May (twice), 8 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 22 Mar, 4 (twice), 15 Apr. 1623.

217. SRO, E71/29/7, 17 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 22 Mar, 4, 17 Apr, 24 May, 8 Aug. 1623.

Dutch ports, eight times alone from Amsterdam between May 1622 and August 1623, and on all occasions he imported only cereals.<sup>218</sup> David Jenkin, however, was not merely attracted to Dutch ports because of grain. He imported goods on ten vessels from this area without once involving the staple port.<sup>219</sup> His imports in 1621-3 included a total of 800 pounds of sugar, 660 pounds of raisins, 200 pounds of madder, and 400 bolls of salt from Rotterdam as well as 1,700 bolls of salt, 1,100 pounds of sugar and 1,600 knappalds from Amsterdam. After 1636 he paid dues on 124 tuns of goods from Dutch ports, none of which was Campvere.<sup>220</sup> John Bisset imported sugar, raisins, liquorice and spices in addition to grain from Amsterdam three times in 1622 and 1623, his only interest in importing during these years.<sup>221</sup> He did, however, import tobacco from Campvere in April 1627.<sup>222</sup> Certainly, while these merchants' interests in Amsterdam or Rotterdam in the 1620s may have been merely to take advantage of those cities grain markets during a period of shortages in Scotland, enough evidence exists of commercial intercourse in other commodities to suggest that the elite were starting to favour Middelburg, Amsterdam or Rotterdam above Campvere. Indeed, during 1638 and 1639 Edinburgh's connections in Amsterdam played an important role in supplying ammunition for the Covenanting armies. In December 1638 fifty tons of armour arrived in Leith from Amsterdam.<sup>223</sup> Seven months later,

---

218. SRO, E71/29/7, 16, 20, 29 May, 17, 22 July (twice), 1, 2, 8 Aug 1622; E71/29/8, 5 July, 7 Aug. 1623.

219. SRO, E71/29/7, 9 Nov. 1621, 1 Apr, 20, 29 May, 1 June, 17, 22 July, 12, 15, 26 Aug, 14 Sept. 1622; E71/29/8, 24 Dec. 1622, 22 Mar, 17 Apr, 2 June, 3, 5 July, 12 Sept (twice), 15 Oct. 1623.

220. ECA, Merk of the Tun, 12 Aug. 1636, 23 Aug. 1637, 27 July 1638, 23 Apr. 1639.

221. SRO, E71/29/7, 15 Aug. 1622; E71/29/8, 8, 15 Aug. 1623.

222. SRO, E71/29/10, no date, perhaps April 1627.

223. ECA, Merk of the Tun, 13 Dec. 1638.



Lawrence Henderson and John Smith were cautioners for a consignment of arms and ammunition imported from Amsterdam; it included five tuns of armour, which included forty-one lasts of muskets and swords, as well as one chest of pistols, 600 pikes, 100 pounds of gunpowder, six brass cannons and 160 cannon balls.<sup>224</sup>

The import trade from the Netherlands was spilling out from Campvere in this period yet the Staple port still dominated the export trade. Not all goods marked as being bound for Campvere would have ended up in that port due to the practice of transshipping on to smaller boats.<sup>225</sup> Certainly the merchants of the more sophisticated, larger Low Country markets were not impressed by the quality of Scottish exports.<sup>226</sup> Only Alexander Brown, William Dick, Thomas Moffet, James Nairn, John Porterfield, John Sloan, George Suttie and William Wilkie exported goods directly from Leith to either Amsterdam or Rotterdam in 1611-2, 1627 and 1628.<sup>227</sup> A total of 4,430 bolls of grain was shipped during these years to either Rotterdam or Amsterdam equalling twenty-six percent of all grain exported during these years. Most of this, 2,960 bolls, was exported by William Dick. The only other goods exported to these two cities consisted of a small amount of cloth, no more

---

224. ECA, Shore Dues, 5 July 1639. Merk of the Tun, 5 July 1639. Forty tons of armour did also arrive from Campvere. See ibid., 17 Dec. 1638.

225. See above n.190.

226. Guicciardini states that Antwerp merchants were unimpressed by the quality of Scottish cloth in the 1560s (Devine and Lythe, 'The Scottish economy under James VI', 103-4).

227. Brown: SR0, E71/29/11, 24 July 1628. Dick: E71/29/9, 9 Apr. (twice), 4 May 1627; E71/29/11, 5, 15 Mar, 10 Apr, 12 (twice), 23 May, 31 Oct. 1628. Moffet: ibid., 21 Oct. 1628. Nairn: ibid., 21 Oct. 1628. Porterfield, E71/29/6, 23 May 1612. Sloan: E71/29/9, 13 Mar. 1627. Suttie: ibid., 13 Mar. 1627. Wilkie: E71/29/11, 23, 24 July 1628.

800 ells. Otherwise, except for the cases when a vague description of the intended port as being in Holland or Flanders was inserted in the customs roll, all of the elite's exports to the Netherlands ended up in Campvere. Between 1626 and 1628 the elite exported 397 daikers of hides, eighty percent of all the hides they exported, to Campvere. At least eighty percent of all sheepskins exported by the elite between 1626 and 1628 ended up in the Staple port during these two years. In addition to which, seventy-nine percent of their cloth exports were to Campvere.<sup>228</sup> Those amongst the elite exporting regularly to Campvere included George Suttie, who exported cloth, skins and hides to there on sixteen occasions between 1626 and 1628.<sup>229</sup> Patrick Ellis exported plaiding, skins and hides sixteen times during the same years.<sup>230</sup> John Kniblo exported twenty-one times to Campvere between 1626-8.<sup>231</sup> Robert Fleming exported to there eleven times; John Smith on ten occasions, Charles Hamilton nine times, Thomas Moffet and William Salmond the same, John Ritchie seven times.<sup>232</sup>

---

228. See appendix III.

229. SRO, E71/29/9, 3 Apr. 22 May, 27 Aug, 8, 13, 15 Sept., 17 Oct. 1627; E71/29/11, 5 Dec. 1627, 24 Jan, 3 Mar, 22 July, 8-19 Aug, 19 Aug, 1, 8 Sept. 4 Oct. (twice), 1628.

230. SRO, E71/29/9, 16 Jan, 3, 15 Apr, 27 Aug, 8 Sept, 17 Oct. 1627; E71/29/11, 5 Dec. 1627, 24, 29 Jan, 3 Mar, 22 Apr, 22 July, 19, 23 Aug, 1 Sept, 4 Oct. 1628.

231. SRO, E71/29/9, 6 Feb, 15 Mar, 3, 15 Apr, 11 June, 6, 17 July, 27 Aug, 8, 15 Sept, 17 Oct. 1627; E71/29/11, 5 Dec. 1627, 22 Apr. (twice), 12 May 9, 28 June, 22 July, 19, 23 Aug, 1 Sept, 4 Oct (twice), 1628.

232. Fleming: SRO, E71/29/9, 4 Dec. 1626, 6 Feb, 8, 15 Sept. 1627; E71/29/11, 29 Jan, 22 Apr. (twice), 9, 28 June, 8-19 Aug, 4 Oct. 1628. Smith: E71/29/9, 11 June, 17 July, 27 Aug, 8, 15 Sept. 1627; E71/29/11, 3 Mar, 22 Apr. (twice), 23 Aug, 8 Sept, 4 Oct, 1628. Hamilton: E71/29/9, 4 Dec. 1626, 11 June, 17 July, 27 Aug. 1627; E71/29/11, 24 Jan, 8-19 Aug, 19 Aug, 8 Sept, 4 Oct. 1628. Moffet: E71/29/9, 22 May, 11 June, 8 Sept. 1627; E71/29/11, 5 Dec. 1627, 3 Mar, 22 Apr. (twice), 12 May, 4 Oct. 1628. Salmond: E71/29/9, 16 Jan, 6 Feb, 3, 15 Apr, 1627; E71/29/11, 5 Dec, 1627, 29 Jan, 3 Mar, 22 Apr, 22 July 1628. Ritchie: E71/29/9, 6 Feb, 15 Apr, 17 Oct. 1627; E71/29/11, 5 Dec, 1627, 29 Jan, 22 Apr, 12 May 1628. Trotter: E71/29/9, 27 Aug 1627; E71/29/11, 12 May, 22 July, 8-19 Aug, 19 Aug, 8 Sept 1628.

Edinburgh's merchants maintained and consolidated their grip over trade with the Netherlands in this period. The traditional pattern of trade — both of commodities involved and the use of the Staple port of Campvere — persisted in the export trade. The bulk of sheepskins, hides and cloth exports were sent to Campvere which acted as a distribution centre for Scottish goods throughout Europe. There were, however, new and significant trends in the import trade. Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants were able to successfully establish business connections in Middelburg, Rotterdam as well as the then most important commercial centre of Europe — Amsterdam.

The early years of the seventeenth century witnessed a growing dependency on the Scottish economy upon trade with a country traditionally its hostile rival — England. Most studies of Anglo-Scottish trade imply that after 1603 England, and in particular the east-coast ports, became significant market places for Scottish goods. Indeed, it has been suggested that England was beginning to replace Continental markets as a major source of manufactured goods for Scotland. The pacification of the border, the building of physical links such as bridges, the creation of a regular postal service, and the union of the crowns all served to stimulate both an economic and a political rapprochement.<sup>233</sup> The customs records for Leith would seem to bear out this idea. Eight ships left for English ports in 1611-2 and sixty-six between 1626-8.<sup>234</sup> Fifty-eight ships arrived from English ports between 1621 and 1623 but only forty-three from 1636 to 1639.<sup>235</sup> During those years

---

233. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 193-9; Smout, Scottish Trade, 194; Devine and Lythe, 'The economy of Scotland under James VI', 102-3.

234. See appendix V.

235. See appendices II, IV.



only 512 tuns of goods were imported from English ports, less than two percent of all goods arriving by sea.<sup>236</sup> Of the 512 tuns arriving from England, the elite paid dues on 179 tuns, some thirty-five percent. The numbers of the elite according to the customs lists engaged in trade with England is also remarkably limited. A total of merely fifty of the wealthiest men in the burgh either imported to or exported from England. Thirty-three merchants were only involved in importing, seven only in exporting, and ten of the elite practised both. However, it must also be stated that of these fifty merchants only eighteen imported from England by sea while thirty-two elite merchants imported English wares by land via the customs posts set up at Carlisle or Berwick. The records of these customs posts exist only for three years between 1624 and 1628, perhaps not giving a long enough run to be able to speculate accurately.<sup>237</sup> Nevertheless, it may be taken from these figures that while sea trade with England was of limited import it was the land trade, particularly with the cloth-producing areas of Cumbria and Yorkshire, which was of interest to the burgh elite. Evidence from other sources does suggest that more than fifty of the elite had commercial relations with England. However, although it may be rash to draw firm conclusions from the limited evidence available, it would appear that the high point of Scottish trade with England by the elite had been reached by the late 1620s

---

236. It is somewhat surprising given the political situation of 1638-9 that the total number of tuns that year amounted to 139, a rise of almost forty percent over 1637-8, but a drop of fifty-seven percent over 1636-7.

237. They are contained within SRO, E71/29/9, 11; E71/30/30. McMillan states that only a solitary customs book of 1625 survives (The Edinburgh Burgess Community, 262).

and entered a period of almost total collapse in the growing political crisis of the late 1630s. Prior to 1603 a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards that country and its produce existed in Scotland. Despite the numerous prohibitions trade did survive nevertheless. In 1601 five of Edinburgh's wealthiest men faced prosecution before the privy council for importing both English cloth and 'other wares' contrary to regulations.<sup>238</sup> That Scottish merchants in general, and the elite in particular, seized upon the union of the crowns as an opportunity for some sort of commercial union with England is beyond doubt. As early as March 1604 Edinburgh sent a representative, William Nisbet, to London to look after the town's affairs there.<sup>239</sup> In August, 1604, Richard Dobie advanced some 5,000 merks to the town for the financing of a committee to be sent to England to negotiate a union between the two countries.<sup>240</sup> A further committee, with two members of the elite as Edinburgh's representatives, was sent to discuss this question in August 1605.<sup>241</sup> Scots were no longer charged a subsidy as aliens at English ports after 1604 but by 1611 the English re-imposed excise duties on Scots merchandise complaining about the unwarranted intrusion into their commercial life by Scots merchants.<sup>242</sup> This effectively killed any idea of a commercial union. Even so, Scots attempted to enter the English market place.

---

238. RPC, vi, 321.

239. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xi, 14 Mar. 1604.

240. Ibid., xi, 29 May 1605.

241. Ibid., xi, 9 Aug. 1605.

242. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 202-9. In 1613 George Todrig did complain to the Convention of Royal Burghs that he was forced to pay foreign customs at Scarborough although he should have paid as a native born Englishman (RCRB, ii, 408).

A Scottish staple house was established in London in 1616; and in 1632 Charles I proclaimed that there should be equality of imports between England, Scotland and Ireland.<sup>243</sup> Patrick Wood lent the town over £4,000 to send burgh commissioners to England in 1634, indicating that commercial problems between the two countries persisted.<sup>244</sup> Even after 1660 English merchants remained hostile to attempts by their northern counterparts to trade in England.<sup>245</sup>

Despite these setbacks the Edinburgh elite enjoyed a healthy trading relationship with England until the late 1630s. Only ten members of the elite imported cloth by sea in 1621-3 from England.<sup>246</sup> Yet, these men managed to bring to Leith 3,189 yards and 140 pieces of bays and says from London. This was equal to about forty percent of all bays and says measured in yards, and all of that cloth measured in pieces.<sup>247</sup> They imported 3,069 yards of broad cloth from England, equal to fifty-seven percent of all broad cloth imported to Leith between 1621 and 1623. They imported 813 yards of grograin from London equal to seventy-six percent of all the grograin measured in yards imported into the country. They also imported 534 ells of taffetta from England; all the pyropas which they brought in was English; and almost a quarter of the rissillis. These ten men also imported from England all of the hats brought into Leith during those two years. The trade by sea with England consisted mainly of imports of cloth or haberdashery, although a

---

243. RPC, x, 542; iv, 1630-32, 458-9.

244. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 25 June 1634.

245. Smout, Scottish Trade, 195-6.

246. They were Stephen Boyd, Thomas Lindsay, William Mitchell, James Hamilton, James Rae, John Rhind, George Stirling, Alexander Telfer, John Trotter and Patrick Wood.

247. See appendix I for all below.



small amount of pewter, hops, lead, peas was imported from England by William Dick, James Galloway, David Jenkin and Gilbert Kirkwood.<sup>248</sup> However, the amount of cloth brought by land, over the border on pack horses between 1624 and 1628 closely rivalled the amount imported by sea.

It is possible to examine the border customs records of Berwick and Carlisle for a limited period of three years - 1624-5 and 1626-8.<sup>249</sup> During this period thirty-two of the burgh's wealthiest merchants imported cloth and haberdashery through these border towns. They imported a total of 10,993 ells and 706 pieces of mixed cloth, including bays, says, broad cloth and grograin most of which came from London. A total of 8,874 yards and 1,402.5 pieces of English cloth had been imported by sea between 1621 and 1623, and all of that from London. However, between 1624-5 and 1626-8 entries are made of northern English cloth entering Scotland although this was merely counted in packs. Members of the elite imported 159 packs of Yorkshire cloth; seventy-four packs of Manchester cloth; thirty-seven packs of white Kendal cotton as well as eighteen packs of cloth described merely as white English cotton and 1 pack of corsey. This certainly indicates that Edinburgh merchants were well aware of the growing influence which the northern English towns, probably Leeds, Kendal and Manchester, had on the English cloth trade. In addition to cloth the border customs records lists an import total on the part of the elite of ninety-one pounds of silk, twenty-one pounds

---

248. SRO, E71/29/7, 20 May, 6 Sept. 1622; E71/29/8, 30 May, 21 Aug, 13 Oct. 1623.

249. See above, n. 237.

of lace; twenty-four dozen hats, including three dozen sun hats, 477 pairs of hose whether English, Scottish or merely woollen and twenty-five dozen pairs of gloves. The use of land tracks from England through the borders to Edinburgh must have been a fairly cheap and attractive means of transporting goods and the elite did not scorn its regular use. Stephen Boyd registered cloth at Carlisle in October 1627 and also declared amongst the goods transported '... a pack '... that had nothing but my lord of Binning's clothes'.<sup>250</sup> Lawrence Henderson brought Yorkshire cloth to Scotland via Carlisle once in 1625 and Yorkshire and Manchester cloth through Berwick once in 1627 and again in 1628.<sup>251</sup> Andrew Hill imported cloth either through Berwick or Carlisle on six occasions from September 1625 to September 1628.<sup>252</sup> David Mitchell used these routes three times between October 1627 and May 1628 and William Mitchell seven times between August 1625 and September 1628.<sup>253</sup> Thomas Moodie imported Yorkshire and Manchester cloth nine times from April 1625 to October 1628.<sup>254</sup> James Murray was the main importer of Kendal cotton importing twenty-three packs and ten packs of English cotton through Carlisle five times from August 1625 to February 1628.<sup>255</sup> He must have re-exported some of this

---

250. SR0, E71/29/9, 5 Oct. 1627 through Carlisle.

251. SR0, E71/30/30, 27 Sept. 1625 through Carlisle; E71/29/9, 29 Aug. 1627 through Berwick; E71/29/11, 8 Sept. 1628 through Berwick.

252. SR0, E71/30/30, 12 Sept. 1625 through Carlisle; E71/29/9, 18 June, 5 Sept. 1627, through Carlisle; E71/29/11, 25 Feb, 30 June 1628 through Carlisle, 2 Sept 1628 through Berwick.

253. SR0, E71/30/30, 29 Aug. 1625 through Carlisle; E71/29/9, 8, 20 May, 1 Oct 1627, through Carlisle, 11 Apr, 2 Sept, 11 Oct 1627 through Berwick; E71/29/11, 1 Sept 1628 through Carlisle, 25 Apr. 1628 through Berwick.

254. SR0, E71/30/30, 26 Apr, 31 May, 27 Sept. 17 Oct 1625 through Carlisle; E71/29/9, 20 Aug, 17 Sept 1627 through Carlisle; E71/29/11, 26 Mar, 5 June, 6 Oct 1628 through Carlisle.

255. SR0, E71/30/30, 29 Aug, 27 Sept 1625 through Carlisle; E71/29/9, 27 May, 4 July 1627 through Carlisle; E71/29/11, 15 Feb 1628 through Carlisle.

Kendal cotton, for he is registered as having exported this sort of cloth to Scandinavia, the Baltic and Holland in 1627 and 1628.<sup>256</sup> Patrick Wood imported through the borders eight times from March 1627 to August 1628, bringing in a total of 2,414 ells of English cloth, as well as silk, hats, worsted hose, gloves, six packs of Yorkshire cloth and 'thirty pairs of woollen buthose in my lord Haddington's trunks'.<sup>257</sup>

Far fewer numbers of the elite exported goods to England according to the customs records of 1611-2, 1626-8. Only sixteen of the burgh's wealthiest men exported goods to England. The goods exported were amongst the traditional Scottish exports: skins, in particular goatskins, tar, grain and linen yarn. There also seemed to be a large market in London for feathers; James Rae exported 1,360 pounds of feathers to England in February 1611 and January 1612;<sup>258</sup> and David Murray, one of the main exporters of goatskins to London, also exported a total of 3,620 pounds of feathers in April, June and July 1627 and March and April 1628.<sup>259</sup> However, these feathers and goatskins were the chief exports to England, although, once again, the border routes into England must have been very busy although scant evidence survives. Only two references of overland track routes into England occur in the customs lists. In September 1627 Patrick Wood sent 'to England, by horse' a total of 106 ells of cloth, six pounds of silk, two

---

256. SR0, E71/29/9, 7 June, 23 July, 27 Aug 1627; E71/29/11, 22 Mar, 8, 19 Apr 1628. See also above n. 69.

257. SR0, E71/29/9, 27 Mar, 2 Apr, 1627 through Carlisle, 26 Oct 1627 through Berwick; E71/29/11, 8 Nov 1627, 2 Apr 1628 through Carlisle, 10 Nov 1627, 16, 29 Aug 1628 through Berwick.

258. SR0, E71/29/6, 16 Feb 1611, 10 Jan 1612.

259. SR0, E71/29/9, 13 Apr, 6 June, 1, 2 July 1627; E71/29/11, 7 Dec 1627, 14 Mar, 22 Apr, 22 May, 20 July 1628.



pieces of pyropus and six pieces of camlets.<sup>260</sup> In October of that same year Andrew Oswald exported 160 ells of linen cloth and forty pounds of linen yarn to England by land.<sup>261</sup> Nevertheless, the Edinburgh elite were more likely to import from England than export to it – the major part of their exported goods was still reserved for Campvere.

That the elite did establish something of a commercial foothold in England prior to 1640 is undeniable. Thomas Bannatyne owed more than £4,500, almost eighty percent of his debts, to various merchants in London in 1615. Twenty years later he owed all of his debts, although under £400, to a London merchant.<sup>262</sup> James Halyburton owed a London merchant almost £300 in 1616 and Henry Morison had established a factor in London by 1623, being owed £200 by him that year.<sup>263</sup> Alexander Dennistoun owed £12,000 to Richard Pearson, an Englishman, for merchandise in 1626.<sup>264</sup> John Hamilton purchased drugs worth £1,800 from a group of London merchants in 1630.<sup>265</sup> In 1632 George Stirling owed £566 to merchants in London.<sup>266</sup> Patrick Wood exported salt to London in 1634.<sup>267</sup> Thomas Moodie, an importer of Yorkshire cloth in the 1620s, owed two merchants in Leeds £6 sterling in 1636, which he instructed Alexander Ranken, a chapman,

---

260. SRO, E71/29/9, Sept. 1627.

261. Ibid., 20 Oct. 1627.

262. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Little, 29 Dec. 1615; 28 Oct. 1635.

263. ECA, DGCR, iii, 19 Nov. 1617; Edin. Tests, 19 Feb. 1624.

264. Edin. Tests, Katherine Johnston, 24 Jan. 1627.

265. Edin. Tests, Katherine Brown, 4 Sept. 1632.

266. Edin. Tests, Margaret Hadden, 26 Mar. 1633.

267. ECA, DGCR, iv, 19 Mar. 1634.

to pay on his behalf.<sup>268</sup> However, by 1638 trade with England on the part of the elite diminished. Less than 200 tuns of goods from England had duty paid on it by members of the elite between 1636 and 1639.<sup>269</sup>

In 1638-9 only six tuns arrived from London for the richest merchants of Scotland. The drying-up of the English trade in the late 1630s may have had origins beyond the obvious and political ones. Patrick Wood, one of the burgh's leading traders with England was forced to conclude in May 1637 that money was very scarce in London making trade there difficult. The city of London faced demands from the crown for substantial sums of money both as loans and fines from 1636 which undoubtedly affected the men trading there.<sup>270</sup>

The customs lists, while a useful indicator of the elite's import and export trade, are themselves open to an amount of distortion due to smuggling. While rampant abuse of the excise duties on the part of the elite has not been discovered a certain amount has been found. The privy council recognized the problem of custom abuse in 1600 and moved to prevent evasions of payment of these dues on the part of skippers and ship owners who '... privatlie in the night season lossis ane part of the mercheandise being within the same schippis in unfrie harbours and portis...'<sup>271</sup> William Turnbull was accused before the privy council of defrauding the customs regulations by using an unfree port in 1603. It was alleged that in May of that year the Blessing of God of Dysart

---

268. SRO, B22/8/29, 10 Apr. 1637.

269. See appendix II.

270. Pearl, London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution, 83-7, 276.

271. RPC, vi, 85-6.

unloaded a packet of merchandise belonging to Turnbull into a fish boat on the Forth near Gullane, which transported the goods to 'Craig of Fethray', defrauding the customs. An attempt was made to make an example of Turnbull '... to the terrour of utheris to commit the lyk heirefter...' but the case against him was eventually dropped.<sup>272</sup> In 1610 James Moses, one of the owners of the Grace of Montrose which had sailed from Dieppe in February was accused of illegally discharging goods '... quietlie, craftelie and undewtifullie'. In turn, he accused both William Cochrane of forcing him to import five coffers and a bale of goods to Scotland and to discharge the goods above Leith, and Robert Acheson of unloading his merchandise unlawfully at South Queensferry.<sup>273</sup> Henry Morison took a more active role in smuggling. When caught illegally transporting tallow in 1616 he attempted to pitch the customs officer overboard and was only prevented from doing so by the concerted efforts of the ship's company.<sup>274</sup> John Wilkie was cautioned in 1618 against hiding English goods in his house in an attempt to defraud the customs.<sup>275</sup> In 1620 Gabriel Ranken, amongst others, was discovered by customs officers at Bo'ness hiding Flemish merchandise within a coal shipment. They refused to open the goods for inspection and furtively removed them. Ranken was found guilty and ordered to be put in ward at Edinburgh tolbooth.<sup>276</sup> In January 1622 Patrick Ramsay admitted giving an incorrect entry of wine which he had

---

272. Ibid., vi, 572-4. His servant swore an oath that the allegation was untrue.

273. Ibid., viii, 449-50.

274. Ibid., xi, 8-9.

275. Ibid., xi, 489.

276. Ibid., xii, 288-9.



imported and was fined £10.<sup>277</sup> In April of that year John Penman payed triple customs of £68 14s on cloth which he had imported from Flanders but had not declared to customs officials.<sup>278</sup> In 1629 John Ronald imported linseed to Leith from Konigsberg employing James Lyall to act as his commissioner. Lyall, however, made a short entry of Ronald's goods, despite the skipper's, and other merchant's, plaintive entreaties to make a lawful declaration in order to keep the ship free of all prosecutions for customs evasion. So distressed at this fraud was another merchant on the vessel that he himself paid the correct duties on Ronald's goods at the Danish Sound Toll and sued Ronald for repayment.<sup>279</sup> The 'Compt Book of Edward Little' also reveals a few attempts made by elite merchants to defraud customs in 1638 and 1639. In November 1638 George Suttie was cautioner for a ship from Campvere which declared it brought eighteen tuns but had its cargo estimated at forty tuns.<sup>280</sup> In December of the same year James Somerville paid duty on sixty-nine tuns arriving from Bordeaux although the master had declared only fifty-four tuns.<sup>281</sup> This must only have been the tip of the iceberg where smuggling was concerned and the elite were not above dabbling in these murky waters. In a discussion of Scottish trade in the late seventeenth century it has been stated that particulars

---

277. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 9 Jan. 1622.

278. SRO, E71/29/7, April 1622, entered in book after list of entries of April 1622.

279. ECA, DGCR, iv, 16 Dec. 1629. Ronald was ordered to pay John Ker twenty-six rex dollars.

280. ECA, Shore Dues, 29 Nov. 1638. Suttie paid duty on twenty tuns.

281. Ibid., 12 Dec. 1638. There were other cases of this, see ibid., 7 Mar, 1, 20, 22 Apr, 1639.

entered in customs accounts about cargoes must always be treated with some caution. Figures given for amounts of Scottish trade can never be accurate due both to an uneven levying of tariffs and the ingenuity of merchants in smuggling - described as 'the national vice of the Scots'.<sup>282</sup> Merchants of the earlier part of the century were not immune from the same temptations and the customs records for that period must also be regarded with some suspicion.

It has been stated that 'records of coastal shipping are non-existent', for Edinburgh's trade in the seventeenth century.<sup>283</sup> However, a single record for 1638-9, 'The Compt Book of Edward Little' does give a list of some 249 ships arriving in Leith from Scottish ports.<sup>284</sup> The list is limited, it only gives the name of the ship, its master, its point of embarkation and a brief description of its cargo. No names are given of the merchants involved in the trade and the list is, therefore, of limited use in examining the role played by the burgh's wealthiest merchants in the coastal trade of Scotland. The cargoes mainly comprised grain shipments or barrels of herring arriving at Leith, probably for re-shipment abroad rather than for the consumption in the capital. The surprising fact revealed by the list is the lack of vessels arriving in Leith from the larger burghs, notably from Aberdeen. It has been written that Edinburgh considered both Dundee and Aberdeen as its hinterland.<sup>285</sup> However, only sixteen ships arrived from these ports, fifteen of them from Dundee. Twenty-seven

---

282. Smout, Scottish Trade, 38-41.

283. McMillan, The Edinburgh Burgess Community, 262.

284. ECA, Shore Dues; see also appendix VI.

285. MacNiven, Merchant and Trader, 149, 157-8.

ships arrived from Montrose and twenty-six from Dunbar reflecting the former's importance both as a grain and fishmarket and the latter's function as a supplier of cured herring. The rest of the places listed reveal the importance of the Fife ports as collection points for agricultural produce prior to shipment to the capital. The twelve ships arriving from Orkney probably carried produce for William Dick who not only held wadset of the islands but also exported Orkney butter on numerous occasions. If this list is a complete record of Scottish shipping for 1638-9 it probably reflects that trade was already affected by the uncertainties of the political situation in the country. The numbers of ships entered seems far too small for a port as apparently important as was Leith. It does, however, serve to underline the fact that much of the trade between Edinburgh and its hinterland was carried on by land - making use of packhorses.

Edinburgh's merchants had extended their trading tentacles throughout Scotland in the sixteenth century;<sup>286</sup> connections in the Borders, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Dumfriesshire and Aberdeenshire had brought these areas into Edinburgh's economic hinterland. The wealthiest merchants of the early seventeenth century were also aware of the enormous market for their goods provided by the interior of the country. Surprisingly, little evidence of the actual mechanics of this type of trade survives. While the testaments of the elite abound in references to debts owed to them for goods sold to merchants in other Scottish towns it is not clear whether these debts were contracted as a result of the

---

286. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 185, 189, 193.



Edinburgh merchant's travels to the localities or by those town's traders visiting the elite's booths and warehouses in Edinburgh. It is the latter which is most likely.<sup>287</sup> If these wealthy merchants did tout their goods from burgh to burgh on packhorses it is highly unlikely that they accompanied these goods personally - probably hiring servants to do so. There is evidence that some members of the elite travelled through Scotland in order to purchase goods; John Dougal purchased salmon personally in a four-month tour of the north of Scotland in 1636.<sup>288</sup> Most of the elite who were actively trading at the time of their death were owed sums for merchandise throughout the country.<sup>289</sup> George Cunningham was owed for merchandise in Caithness, Kirkcaldy, Dunbar, Kelso and Elgin in 1613.<sup>290</sup> In 1617 James Cochrane was owed over £6,000 in Falkirk, Musselburgh, Haddington, Caithness, Glasgow, Tain, Jedburgh and Dunbar.<sup>291</sup> Gabriel Ranken was owed a total of almost £5,000 in 1621 for merchandise by traders in such diverse towns as Dysart, Queensferry, Culross, Kelso, Peterhead, Stirling, Buckhaven, Glasgow and Fraserburgh.<sup>292</sup> James Inglis was owed debts for cloth in Jedburgh, Elgin, Dunfermline, Tranent, Kinghorn

---

287. Certainly merchants of other burghs did travel abroad from Leith. See McMillan, *The Edinburgh Burgess Community*, 170.

288. SRO, GD 18/2380/10.

289. For example in Dumfries. See Coutts, *Social and Economic History of the Commissariat of Dumfries*, 95. John Fullerton and John Denholm were owed money.

290. Edin. Tests, 10 Aug. 1613.

291. Edin. Tests, Isabelle McNaught, 18 Feb. 1618.

292. Edin. Tests, 27 Oct. 1621.

and Glasgow in 1622.<sup>293</sup> In 1623 Lawrence Henderson's business interests spread along the Forth from Linlithgow and Stirling to Culross.<sup>294</sup> In 1631 Thomas Winram was owed money by merchants in Haddington, Falkirk, Dunbar, Glasgow, Stirling, Ayr, Dumfries, Culross and Dysart.<sup>295</sup> John Kniblo was owed sums in Dunfermline, Dumfries, Irvine, Jedburgh, Kelso, Elgin, Lanark and Dundee in 1634, totalling to over £3,500.<sup>296</sup> In 1636, Alexander Monteath was owed debts, mostly for wine supplied by him in Glasgow, Orkney, Culross, Shetland, Inverness, Dunbar and Anstruther.<sup>297</sup> In 1638 Gilbert Williamson was owed almost £1,000 by merchants in Aberdeen, as well as £776 in Montrose and smaller sums in Banff and Peebles.<sup>298</sup> David Jenkin, three years later, was owed for merchandise by men in Berwick, Dundee, Burntisland, Dysart and Kirkcaldy and John Fleming had business transactions in Aberdeen, St. Andrews, Perth, Dumbarton and Ayr in 1642.<sup>299</sup> There does not appear to have been a division of the country into particular areas in which certain members of the elite specialized. Their interests were widespread, reflecting the dominance of the Edinburgh elite throughout the country as the most important source of merchandise.

---

293. Edin. Tests, 2 Jan. 1623.

294. Edin. Tests, Bessie Hamilton, 8 Jan. 1624.

295. Edin. Tests, 25 Jan. 1631. A lot of the debts were owed for the purchase of flax.

296. Edin. Tests, Margaret Philp, 29 May 1634.

297. Edin. Tests, 4 Aug. 1636. He was owed almost £40,000, all of it for merchandise.

298. Edin. Tests, 9 Mar. 1639.

299. Edin. Tests, 15 June 1642, 1 Mar. 1643.

It would appear to have been a select group of Edinburgh's wealthiest men who guided the economic future of the country during the first forty years of the seventeenth century. Fewer than 200 merchants of Edinburgh managed to dominate the overseas import and export trade through Leith. They attempted to integrate their trading practices with the mainstream European countries with some success. The overall patterns of Scottish trade in the early years of the century varied little from the traditional patterns set by merchants of the sixteenth century. Scottish ships still plied the North Sea to the Baltic and Scandinavia, as well as to the south, trading with the ports of the east coast of England, Normandy and the all important staple port of Campvere in Zeeland. Yet, the elite's interest in this did alter somewhat from the traditional mould. They began to trade on a more regular basis with France and London. Their interests in Holland shifted from Campvere to Middelburg, Rotterdam or Amsterdam. The trading opportunities offered in Scandinavia and the Baltic interested them far less than the opportunities to purchase goods, cloth in particular, in the wealthiest towns of the Netherlands, France and England. The elite imported most of the cloth arriving in Leith and were the merchants chiefly involved in the grain trade. They exported the majority of the cloth, sheepskins and fish leaving the burgh. However, they were also faced with a sharp constriction of trade in the late 1630s caused by the political uncertainties of the times. Scotland entered the seventeenth century with Edinburgh's merchant elite firmly in control of the nation's trade. While



this was its strength, it was also its fatal weakness. Too much of the nation's wealth depended on the actions of too small a group of merchants.<sup>300</sup> The economic troubles of the late 1630s, which witnessed a drop in total imports from almost 13,000 tons in 1636-7 to a mere 6,000 in 1638-9, must have affected Edinburgh's merchant princes more than any other group. Indeed, the plea made by John Rhind in 1640 that it was only the great necessity caused by the extraordinary times and lack of finance which caused him to press his debtors for repayment of his bills must have been one which echoed through many of these merchants' accounting offices.<sup>301</sup> If this wealthy group found itself in economic turmoil by 1640 it could but bode ill for the Scottish economy as a whole.

---

300. Makey, The Church of the Covenant, 153.

301. NLS, Dundas of Dundas MSS, 80.2.4.

## CHAPTER FOUR

THE BUSINESS PRACTICES OF THE BURGH ELITE

The physical acts of merchandising, the importing and exporting of goods, the places frequented as well as the amounts and sorts of items dealt with on a day-to-day basis by Scottish merchants have provided a wide scope for analysis of the Scottish economy as a whole, starting from a period as remote as the foundations of the burghs themselves. However, the mechanisms behind this trade, the workings and business practices which regulated trade, have not been explored in any substantial fashion. It has been written that it was in the final years of the seventeenth century that Scottish merchants began for the first time to demonstrate an awareness of either commercial skills or any sort of business acumen, changing what was essentially the medieval and antiquated systems of merchandising and entering the eighteenth century as efficient and profitable traders. The radical changes effected by these men in business patterns included involvement in the purchasing of rural property; the provision of long term credit; the development of a 'proto-banking' system; industrial investment; and the first stirrings of what could be termed as joint-stock enterprises.<sup>1</sup> Yet, these seemingly profound alterations in the character of Scottish business life may be little more than an amplification of practices

---

1. Devine, 'The merchant class of the larger Scottish towns', 106-8; T.C. Smout, *The Overseas Trade of Scotland with Particular Reference to the Baltic and Scandinavian Trades, 1660-1707* (unpublished University of Cambridge Ph.D, 1960), 4, 29-36.

which had germinated in the early years of the seventeenth century, for all of these so-called 'new developments' were also part of the commercial backdrop against which the wealthiest men of Edinburgh worked between 1600 and 1638. An examination of certain aspects of the elite's methods of working: their involvement in partnerships; the ownership and commercial chartering of ships; the use of factors in foreign cities; the development of a credit structure, involving transferable and heritable bonds, bills of exchange and an awareness of the international money-market; the speculation in, and purchasing of, grain futures, and the channelling of surplus capital into industrial and manufacturing enterprises; all combine to indicate the relative sophistication of this group's entrepreneurial qualities. Doubtless, these men lacked some of the opportunities and skills shown by their mercantile descendants in the eighteenth century. However, their involvement in such relatively advanced business practices argues against the idea put forward of the scope of early seventeenth-century Scottish merchants being both financially and mentally limited.<sup>2</sup>

One of the basic urges felt by early modern merchants must have been the desire to enter into commercial partnerships with other traders. This would provide merchants with a greater pool of capital and contacts from which to draw business. It would also provide a limited form of

---

2. Lythe, Economy of Scotland, 36, 79, 87, 125-6, 128, 133-4.



risk insurance, spreading amongst several men the dangers faced by those involved in trade through such hazards as piracy, shipwreck or defaulting creditors. Three forms of partnership have been distinguished as being prevalent throughout medieval Europe.<sup>3</sup> These have been termed as: (1) a 'service' partnership, the most basic form of partnerships, in which a sleeping partner, supplying the capital behind the adventure, hired a merchant to perform the required retailing - very similar to the Italian commenda; (2) a 'finance' partnership in which the merchant made use of another man's capital, in essence doing little more than borrowing money in order to perform merchandising; and (3) the 'complete' or 'real' partnership, which was a combination of the first two, in which all involved contributed both labour and services as well as capital and shared equally the risks and profits - identical to either the collegantia or the compagna of Italy. However, as in the case with English merchant partnerships, the major problem in applying these forms to Scottish mercantile practices is the lack of direct evidence as to the exact legal nature of these groups. While certain merchant may have operated in what could be assumed to have been partnerships any legal documentation setting up these partnerships does not survive, if, in fact, it had ever existed. The statement that 'in the absence of [any] clear legal and terminological distinctions the

---

3. All discussion of European partnerships is based on M.M. Postan, Medieval Trade and Society (Cambridge, 1973), 65-71.

demarcation between ordinary contracts of service or loan, and those of partnership does not come through very clearly', and the following assumption that the temporary and occasional combinations of merchants were in fact accepted as 'embryonic' partnerships creates as many ambiguities as it solves.<sup>4</sup> The delivery of money or goods by one merchant on the behalf of another, in effect the commenda, does not necessarily imply that a 'partnership', in its strictest sense, existed between these men. Unless both men shared in the profits or losses of the agreement the 'partnership' was in reality nothing more than a hiring of a sort of delivery man to perform a much needed service on the behalf of the hirer and cannot, as such, be viewed as a legitimate form of partnership. It was merely a form of factoring. These 'one-off' combinations, although certainly a common enough practice amongst Scottish merchants from at least the fourteenth century, cannot be regarded as anything other than a stop-gap relationship both of limited economic importance and endurance. Therefore, the use of the commenda, as far as its working affected the burgh elite and their partnerships, may be limited. The idea of a purely 'financial' partnership, based on a relationship of borrowing money, has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> It is the third form of partnership, the collegantia or compagna, in effect the 'joint sale and purchase' arrangement which

---

4. Ibid., 73.

5. See below, chapter five.

affected the wealthiest members of Edinburgh's merchant elite most directly. Certainly, this form of relationship had its own limitations. It was based solely on the purchase and sale of certain, specified merchandise and was considered by both parties to be at an end upon the sale of those goods. Any subsequent transactions between the partners were open to re-negotiation.<sup>6</sup> This form of relationship was found frequently in medieval English customs lists, where certain names are coupled as jointly owning goods, whether on a single occasion or repeatedly. It has been stated that '... some of the recurrent associations were nothing more than a series of occasional partnerships between the same merchants. Two or more persons, relatives or friends, could form a habit of buying and selling in common, and could trade jointly for a number of years...' without the relationship being necessarily formalized into a permanent company.<sup>7</sup> More permanent 'joint-business' partnerships did exist, although these were usually registered as such, were for a specified period, and involved the joint ownership of stock, goods and a sharing of profits. The most obvious of these forms of partnerships was that involving the owning of ships.<sup>8</sup> It must, however, be stated that these forms of partnerships indicated above are based on research into the business

---

6. Postan, Medieval Trade and Society, 83-4.

7. Ibid., 85.

8. Ibid., 86-8.



methods of fifteenth and sixteenth-century English merchants, and examinations of early medieval Scottish partnerships appear to reveal only a form of simple commenda at work.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, a similar pattern of mercantile involvement to the English practices was employed by Edinburgh merchants between 1600 and 1638.<sup>10</sup> While a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Scottish merchant was more likely to transact his business relationships on the basis of the commenda, the wealthiest merchants of the early seventeenth century worked on the slightly more sophisticated level of the collegantia or compagna echoing the trends already experienced by merchants more in the mainstream of the European economy.<sup>11</sup> The most obvious reason for a group of merchants entering into a partnership was for the purpose of trade. Members of the burgh elite are revealed by the surviving customs lists as having been regular participators in this activity, for purposes of both import and export. Evidence from these records makes mention not only of men directly described as 'partners', but also lists people as joint owners of the merchandise on board the vessels. Those indicated directly as being partners include the registration that in June 1612 John Sinclair, John Trotter

---

9. Ewan, The Burgesses of Fourteenth Century Scotland, 218, 230-31, 237. Stevenson, Trade Between Scotland and the Low Countries, 185.

10. It has been shown that in Aberdeen partnerships were not formed by the merchants, MacNiven, Merchant and Trader, 241. Coutts states that Dumfries partnerships were temporary, Coutts, Social and Economic History of Dumfries 1600-1665, 94.

11. Ball, Merchants and Merchandise, 24; Coleman, The Economy of England, 53, 58-59; G. Braudel, 'Pre-modern towns', 72; W.E. Minchinton, 'Bristol - metropolis of the west in the eighteenth century', 305, in P. Clark, ed. The Early Modern Town.

and 'partners' exported 400 bolls of bear and oats on the Griphon from Leith to Dort.<sup>12</sup> Ten years later the same John Sinclair with a group described as his 'partners' imported peas from Danzig.<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Williamson and 'partners' imported grain from Vlieland in August 1622, and Alexander Speir and 'partners' imported bear and salt from Amsterdam in September of that same year.<sup>14</sup>

However, there are indications in the shipping lists of the partnership between various members of the elite in 'joint-stock' ownership. The import lists of 1621-3 reveal that on almost eighty occasions merchandise which was brought into Leith harbour was registered as being jointly owned by at least two members of the burgh elite, in addition to whatever else those men may have imported under their own names. The export lists of 1611-2, and 1626 to 1628 reveal as well that goods were shipped out of the port as part of joint-stock endeavours by members of the elite, although to a far lesser degree than in importing. Elite members exported jointly owned stock on fewer than twenty occasions. This perhaps reflects that the export market, limited as it was to fairly traditional items and areas of marketing, presented far fewer risks to those involved and was, therefore, more readily open to a solitary merchant's efforts. The most permanent of these 'joint-stock'

---

12. SRO, E71/29/6, 9 June 1612.

13. SRO, E71/29/7, 16 July 1622. Trotter is not stated as being involved.

14. Ibid., 14 Aug., 12 Sept. 1622.

operations seems to have been based upon the partnership of Alexander Brown and Alexander Monteath. These two merchants, combined at times with other elite merchants, traded in joint stock together on no fewer than ten different occasions in the 1620s indicating the existence of a regularly conducted partnership if not a legally formalized one. In May 1622 these two men imported fifty lasts of bear from Middelburg.<sup>15</sup> A month later a group consisting of 'Alexander Brown, William Wilkie, Alexander Monteath and partners' imported rye from Danzig; in August Brown and Monteath imported grain, as well as small amounts of wax and ash on four different occasions from the Baltic, Middelburg and Amsterdam, although ownership of this stock was also shared by certain other merchants including the elite members Robert Fleming, George Suttie and David McCall.<sup>16</sup> Brown and Monteath imported beans from Rotterdam in March 1623, jointly owned with John Sinclair and Andrew Purves; they imported beans and bear together from Amsterdam in May; rye and wainscotting from Königsberg, with Thomas Carmichael in June; and they exported forty-five lasts of herring to the same Baltic port under joint ownership with John Trotter, James Troup and John Murray in September 1628.<sup>17</sup>

---

15. Ibid., 6 May 1622.

16. Ibid., 26 June, 5, 10, 17, 29 Aug. 1622. That same month Monteath also imported stock with John Sinclair. Brown imported goods with Sinclair as well (ibid., 12, 14 Aug. 1622).

17. SR0, E71/29/8, 22 March, 24 May, 13 June 1623; SR0, E71/29/11, 29 Sept. 1628.



Both Brown and Monteath were also regular traders of goods under their own names. Monteath imported fifteen lasts of bear in July 1622 on the Lamb of Leith under his own name, and Brown imported, under his own auspices, fifteen lasts of rye on the same vessel.<sup>18</sup> Monteath brought to Leith grain from Campvere, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, as well as wax and lint from Danzig, either on his own or in combination with merchants other than Brown a total of ten times from August 1622 to September 1623. These investments did, however, not match in value to those advanced along with Brown.<sup>19</sup> Monteath also exported herring to Elsinore on 19 September 1627 amongst a group which did not include Brown. Monteath further exported six lasts of herring on the Pelican of Lübeck that same day, on which vessel Brown also exported thirty lasts of herring, however as part of a separate combine.<sup>20</sup> Monteath also exported herring from Leith to Gothenburg in November 1627 and hides to Campvere in May 1628.<sup>21</sup> Brown imported goods including cereals, flax, iron and pitch from Danzig, Campvere, Stralsund, Königsberg, Rotterdam and Middelburg between May 1622 and September 1623 on a total of eighteen different vessels, either on his own or as part of joint-stock ventures with merchants other than Monteath.<sup>22</sup> Brown

---

18. SRO, E71/29/7, 2 July 1622.

19. Ibid., 12 Aug. 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 7 Mar. 4, 24 Apr., 26 June, 8, 29 Aug., 17, 18 Sept. 1623.

20. SRO, E71/29/9, 19 Sept. 1627.

21. SRO, E71/29/11, 23 Nov. 1627, 12 May 1628. Monteath exported with John Vaus on 23 Nov. 1627. Monteath also exported goods under his own name on 12 May 1628.

22. SRO, E71/29/7, 13, 21 May, 16, 31 July, 14, 27 Aug. 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 10 Nov., 26 Dec. 1622, 22 Mar., 25 Apr., 4 June, 4, 7, 13, 23 July, 13 Aug., 8 Sept. 1623.

appeared to have been more willing to import goods without Monteath than Monteath was to import without Brown, perhaps indicating a subtle difference in the two merchants' skills and trading practices. Brown also exported to Bordeaux, Danzig, Stockholm, Campvere, Amsterdam, Königsberg and Elsinore, such goods as herring, deals and wheat either as his own stock or as joint property with men other than Monteath, between November 1626 and October 1628, a total of twelve times.<sup>23</sup> Brown's partnership with Monteath, while important to his trade and probably the most permanent of any of the elite's combines, was not the dominant factor in merchandising for Brown himself. The two men were not connected in any familial sense but were obviously members of the same social circles. They were prosecuted together as partners before the privy council in 1618 for illegally exporting grain; swore an oath in 1622 amongst a group of men described as Easterly traders that the exporting of coinage was necessary; and Brown replaced Monteath as Edinburgh's Kirk treasurer in December 1628.<sup>24</sup>

Other elite merchants involved in combines included Andrew Purves who was involved in joint stock adventures with both William Wilkie and Andrew Ainslie, who were also co-owners of merchandise in partnership with each other. Purves and Wilkie imported thirty-two lasts of bear on two ships from Middelburg in May 1622; were part of a combine

---

23. SRO, E71/29/9, 11 Nov., 6 Dec. 1626, 24 Apr., 19, 28 Sept. 1627; SRO, E71/29/11, 8 Apr., 12 May, 9 June, 24 July, 22, 29 Sept., 30 Oct. 1628.

24. RPC, xi, 431-2. Brown was also prosecuted as James Murray's partner, ibid; RPC, xiii, 120-21; ECA, MSS. ETCR, xiv, 28 Dec. 1627, 26 Dec. 1628.

importing bear from Danzig in October of that year; and allied with John Sinelair, Alexander Brown and Alexander Monteath in March 1623 to import beans from Rotterdam.<sup>25</sup> Purves imported beans from Rotterdam and Amsterdam with Andrew Ainslie on three vessels in April 1623.<sup>26</sup> These three ships also carried goods for Wilkie although registered under his own name. Wilkie did also import in partnership with Ainslie. In August 1622 they imported thirty lasts of oats, malt and a barrel of drugs, from Amsterdam, jointly owned with two other merchants; and in April 1623 they combined with Mr. James Strachan and James Ainslie to bring rye and bear to Leith from Nantes.<sup>27</sup> Wilkie and Ainslie also imported goods under their own names at times on the same vessels; in March 1623 Ainslie imported 400 bolls of beans from Nantes on the Hope for Grace, on which vessel Wilkie also brought in 100 bolls of beans.<sup>28</sup> In September 1623 Ainslie imported a small amount of wax on the Unicorn from Danzig, and Wilkie made use of the same vessel to import an equally small shipment of wax and flax.<sup>29</sup>

---

25. SRO, E71/29/7, 1 May, 1 Oct. 1622, 22 Mar. 1623.

26. Ibid., 4, 15 Apr. 1623.

27. Ibid., 8 Aug. 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 17 Apr. 1623.

28. Ibid., 26 Mar. 1623. Mr. James Strachan also had goods on the same ship.

29. Ibid., 17 Sept. 1623. Andrew Simpson also had goods on this ship. He imported goods from Rotterdam in April 1623 in vessels which Wilkie also had goods (ibid., 17 Apr. 1623).



Ainslie and Wilkie exported goods from Leith together only once - in 1627. They co-owned bolls of wheat and bear which was sent to France in March of that year.<sup>30</sup> William Wilkie also exported rye, wheat, peas, malt and bear in 1624-5 with a consortium described as his 'partners', but it is not possible to determine if this included either Ainslie or Purves, neither of whom exported anything other than herring, wax or wool under their own names that year.<sup>31</sup> There may have been a familial connection between these three men explaining their trading relationships. Andrew Purves married an Isabelle Wilkie in January 1610 and Andrew Ainslie married a Marion Wilkie three years later.<sup>32</sup> Purves and Ainslie also served on the town council at the same times in the 1620s and Wilkie and Ainslie did so in the 1630s.<sup>33</sup> In addition to these connections Purves had acted as Wilkie's cautioner in the exporting of grain in 1623.<sup>34</sup>

John Sinclair also demonstrated a strong tendency to enter into joint-stock partnerships in order to import or export goods in and out of Leith. Although these partnerships tended to be conducted on a more ad hoc basis, and were of less lasting endurance than the ones mentioned above, they were also entered into with other members of the burgh elite. Sinclair exported salmon to Dieppe with Ronald Murray in

---

30. SRO, E71/29/9, 10 Mar. 1627. Wilkie exported with Alexander Brown on 28 July 1628 and Ainslie with Brown on 22 Sept. 1628. In 1643 Ainslie had goods to the value of almost £4,000 in venture to Dunkirk with Alexander Brown (Edin. Tests., 25 July 1648).

31. SRO, E71/30/30, 2v.

32. See entries in Appendix VII on Ainslie and Purves.

33. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 237, 280; ibid., 1626-41, 196.

34. RPC, xiii, 182.

November 1611; and grain to Dort in June 1612 with John Trotter and partners.<sup>35</sup> He imported bear from Elsinore with another merchant in June 1622; imported peas from Danzig with his partners and wax with William Dick and John Trotter in July of that year; with Alexander Monteath and Alexander Brown he brought in bear from Danzig on two separate occasions in August 1622; in March 1623 together with Monteath, Brown and Alexander Purves he imported beans from Rotterdam; he imported malt together with John Trotter from Greifswald in June; and imported grain from Danzig a month later in a combine which included Andrew Simpson, John Hamilton and William Somerville, the first two members of the burgh elite.<sup>36</sup> In addition to these combines, Sinclair imported goods under his own name, mostly grain, from Danzig and Rotterdam, wood from Norway, and salt from Spain on a total of seven occasions between June 1622 and July 1623.<sup>37</sup> His relationship with John Trotter was, perhaps, the most significant of any of his combines, for in addition to the instances of partnership between them already mentioned, they also jointly exported a total of 220 bolls of grain and ten chalders of coal between 1624 and 1625.<sup>38</sup>

It is, perhaps, of some significance that according to

---

35. SRO, E71/29/6, 30 Nov. 1611, 9 June 1612.

36. SRO, E71/29/7, 17 June, 16 July, 12, 14 Aug. 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 22 March, 5 June, 5 July 1623.

37. SRO, E71/29/7, 24 June, 14 Aug., 17 Sept. 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 22, 26 Mar., 2, 23 July 1623.

38. SRO, E71/30/30, 2v, 5v.

the evidence of the surviving customs lists most of the combines entered into by any member of the elite were likely to include other merchants considered to have been amongst the wealthiest in the burgh. Partnerships between elite and non-elite members did also exist. John Ritchie imported a mixture of dyes, sweet goods and hemp from Holland in May 1622 with James Campbell; and John Sinclair imported grain from Elsinore with William Rany in June of that year. Elite members such as Alexander Heriot, Gabriel Ranken, Harry Morison, John Veatche, David Jenkin, James Nasmith, Steven Boyd, John Trotter, John Fleming, Lawrence Henderson, David Murray and Alexander Brown all combined with non-elite merchants on at least one occasion either to import or export goods to and from the port of Leith in the 1620s.<sup>39</sup> However, it was more natural for the wealthiest men of the burgh to turn to each other for trading purposes, and on over eighty percent of the times when a member of the elite entered into a combine it was to include others of his ilk. It is also notable that the majority of the elite's combines involved in importing in the mid-1620s were primarily concerned with the grain trade. Merchant combines formed eighty times between 1621 and 1623 but the vast bulk of them were formed to import grain: only six of them imported such necessities as salt, wax, ash, flax, iron and tar, and only once a consignment of

---

39. SR0, E71/29/7, 19 May, 17 June, 3, 4 July, 5, 8, 12, 15 Aug. 1622; SR0, E71/29/8, 18, 22, 25, 29 Mar., 26 May, 2 June, 6 Aug. 1623; SR0, E71/29/11, 22 Apr., 15 May, 30 Oct. 1628.



cloth.<sup>40</sup> The need to import grain caused by the years of agricultural famine at this time may have prompted these wealthy men to pool their capital resources in order to import the much-needed, and therefore highly profitable, commercial foodstuffs. It may, therefore, be somewhat dangerous to assume that these combines operating in the early 1620s reflected a long standing relationship and were not merely a response to a time of crisis. It may have been more normal in other years for members of the elite to operate as their own men and a longer run of customs lists might bear this out. Certainly, the important cloth trade, which the elite dominated, was rarely conducted along the lines of joint-stock partnerships. However, combines of a more permanent form did exist between men connected either socially or familially in the early years of the seventeenth century, particularly involving importing, and while, perhaps, not part of the day-to-day mercantile practices of every member of the elite, were an important and profitable strand of a number of the elite's merchandising methods.

The interest shown in ownership and commercial chartering of trading vessels by certain sections of the burgh elite also reflects their desire to enter into partnerships both of a commercially profitable and lasting nature. Very little has been written about the mechanisms operating behind the ship

---

40. SRO, E71/29/7, 29 Apr., 16 July, 29 Aug., 17, 23 Sept. 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 29 Mar., 19 June 1623.

owning practices of medieval and early modern Europe, let alone about those affecting Scotland.<sup>41</sup> It appears to be the general assumption, in what has been written, that it was conducted very much on the ad hoc basis of the master of a ship -- also being the actual owner of the vessel -- renting out available cargo space to whatever merchants required that their goods be transported. The division of vessels into fractions -- either of halves, quarters, eighths, sixteenths, or thirty-seconds -- was a practice prevalent throughout Europe. This has been assumed to have been merely a temporary division of the vessel's cargo space amongst the merchants chartering it for a particular voyage and only for that voyage. Subsequent importing or exporting by a merchant would require re-negotiation of terms -- both over cargo space and the handling charges with the master. Indeed, as far as seventeenth-century Scotland is concerned, it has been directly stated that there existed no such thing as a separate ship-owning group, and that the skipper/owner hired out his vessel for particular voyages.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, most Edinburgh merchants of the late sixteenth century show little testamentary evidence of shipowning.<sup>43</sup>

---

41. Coleman, Economy of England, 60; Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants of Exeter', 152; Reed, 'Economic Structure and change in seventeenth-century Ipswich', 117, 119; Postan, Medieval Trade and Society, 86-8; MacNiven, Merchant and Trader, 242; McMillan, A study of the Edinburgh business community, 195; Lythe, Economy of Scotland, 126.

42. Ibid., 125-7.

43. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 190, mentions only nine testaments out of over 200 mentioning ship shares. John McMorranne did have shares in a number, however. See Edin. Tests., 23 July 1596.

Later testamentary evidence reveals a substantial capital investment in shipowning by members of the burgh elite. Between 1600 and 1652 a total of forty-three testaments of elite members, or their spouses, show ownership of shares in vessels at the time of their death. This group - almost thirteen percent of all those considered to be amongst the burgh's wealthiest merchants - viewed shipowning as a commercially profitable sideline to their role as merchandisers. They represent the growth of a corps of men who could be termed as 'merchant-shipowners', with a long term interest in sailing vessels.

Investment in shipping made up on average almost twenty-six percent of the total value of the inventory of the elite merchants who invested in shipping between 1600 and 1652. This was a sizeable proportion of any merchant's working capital and, perhaps, indicates that a group of merchants who were also commercial shipowners was emerging. Certainly, if this investment is viewed separately for each decade of the first half of the century there appears to be a growing number of merchants interested in owning shares in vessels, although only after 1640 did a group exist with more than a third of the value of their inventories tied up in shipowning. Between 1601 and 1610 only two elite merchants died leaving commercial shares in ships equal in value to an average of twenty-four percent of their inventories' worth. Between 1611 and 1620 seven elite members died leaving ship interests, equal to an average



of thirteen percent of the total value of their inventories. From 1621 to 1630 an average of twenty-six percent of the total value of the inventories of the eleven merchants who died leaving interests in vessels was invested in ship shares. Between 1631 and 1640 thirteen testaments of elite members recorded investment in shipowning. On average this was equal to about twenty-three percent of the total value of their inventories. From 1641 to 1652 ten testaments of elite members reveal an interest in ship shares and the average worth of these shares in their inventories was equal to some thirty-seven percent of the value of all their goods and gear. The importance of investment in shipping to any one merchant's inventory worth ran from as little as the £200 share which William Rae had in John Lookup's ship in 1619, valued at less than two percent of his total inventory of goods, to the £5,833 6s. 8d. which George Stirling had invested at the time of his death in 1648 in seven different vessels amounting to almost ninety percent of his total inventory.<sup>44</sup> Eighty-one percent of the value of William Salmond's inventory was tied up in owning ships at the time of his death in 1645; and over sixty percent of the value of the inventories of Mr. Nicol Brown's spouse, George Baillie's spouse and of Robert Forsyth in 1611, 1628 and 1630 respectively were invested in ship shares.<sup>45</sup> However, it was unusual

---

44. Edin. Tests, 28 Oct. 1619; 2 June 1649.

45. Ibid., Agnes Graham, 21 Apr. 1612; Christian Voirie, 24 Dec. 1628; 6 July 1631.

for elite members to tie up such large proportions of the value of their inventories in shipowning. More typical were the investments shown by such men as Charles Hamilton who in 1640 had twenty-two percent of his inventory invested in shares in three ships.<sup>46</sup> John Kniblo had twenty-five percent of the value of his inventory in 1634 in the form of shares in three ships.<sup>47</sup> Gabriel Ranken, in 1621, had twenty-seven percent of his inventory's total value invested in two vessels.<sup>48</sup> Thomas Inglis's investments in shipowning ran from having at least thirty percent of his inventory value invested in ship shares at the time of his wife's death in 1607, to having about sixteen percent in shipping upon his death in 1637.<sup>49</sup>

The actual investment in shipping could make up a substantial sum even if it formed only a fraction of the total inventory. David Jenkin had £4,176 13s. 4d. invested in shares in five ships at the time of his death in 1641 although this amounted to only ten percent of the value of his inventory.<sup>50</sup> John Fleming's shares in four vessels, although only amounting in worth to seventeen percent of his

---

46. Ibid., 27 Mar. 1640.

47. Ibid., Margaret Philp, 29 May 1634.

48. Ibid., 27 Oct. 1621.

49. Ibid., Janet Morison, 14 Feb. 1609; 27 Oct. 1637.

50. Ibid., 15 June 1642. Sixteen years earlier his spouse had £2,263 6s. 8d. invested in ships, almost fifty percent of her inventory's value (Edin. Tests, Margaret Lauder, 10 June 1626).

inventory, were worth as much as £3,300.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the most substantial of the elite investors in shipowning in the first half of the seventeenth century was Patrick Wood. At the time of his death in 1638 he held shares in at least thirty-six different vessels - an investment of £21,264 - although this amounted to less than sixteen percent of the total worth of his inventory. His shares in ships included total ownership of the Isabelle, described as a bark, worth £1,583 6s. 8d; a quarter of the Dolphin of Preston worth £1,333 6s. 8d; half of the Blessing of Kinghorn worth the same; a quarter of the James of Leith valued at £2,266 13s. 4d, and one-eighth share of the John of Kirkcaldy worth £1,600.<sup>52</sup>

The evidence indicates that the elite's investment in ship shares was of a long-term nature, rather than them merely renting cargo space for a particular voyage. Ship-owning was viewed as a potentially lucrative commercial adventure. James Forsyth owned shares valued at 5,000 marks in the Gift of God at the time of his death in 1625. He had shipped goods on this vessel in April 1622 from Dieppe, indicating a long term investment with that particular vessel.<sup>53</sup> Charles Hamilton had £700 invested in the John of Leith in 1640 and had used that ship to export his goods to Campvere from at least as early as 1628.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Inglis owned a quarter of John Maw's

---

51. Ibid., 15 June 1642.

52. Ibid., 22 Mar. 1639, 30 Dec. 1640, 19 Mar. 1641, 27 May 1642.

53. Ibid., 5 Apr. 1626; SRO, E71/29/7, 10 Apr. 1622.

54. Edin. Tests., 27 Mar. 1640; SRO, E71/29/11, 4 Oct. 1628.



ship valued at £1,000 in 1607, and by 1611 owned half of the vessel.<sup>55</sup> Inglis also inherited a share in the Diamond of Leith in 1603 which he still held four years later.<sup>56</sup> In 1625 David Jenkin owned shares in the Alexander and the Love of Leith on which he had shipped goods in March and September 1623 respectively.<sup>57</sup> In 1625 he also owned a one-eighth share of the St. John of Leith worth £530 which he, as part of a consortium, had had built in Rotterdam in 1624.<sup>58</sup> Alan Livingston exported goods to Dieppe on the Hopewell of Leith in February 1627, and owned shares in the Hopewell in March 1632.<sup>59</sup> David Murray owned outright a bark, the Falcon, in 1643 and had used that vessel to import cereals from Calais on five different occasions between July 1622 and July 1623.<sup>60</sup> Andrew Purves was amongst a group which had purchased the Gift of God, a vessel of some sixty-eight tons, for 3,800 merks in March 1606. Three years later Purves's share in the vessel was worth £200, a drop in value of £116 13s. 4d.<sup>61</sup>

---

55. Edin. Tests, Janet Morison, 14 Feb. 1609; ECA, DGCR, iii, 27 Sept. 1615. Inglis used this vessel to export goods to Russia.

56. Edin. Tests, 22 Sept. 1603; Janet Morison, 14 Feb. 1609.

57. Ibid., Margaret Lauder, 10 June 1626; SRO, E71/29/8, 22 Mar., 12 Sept. 1623.

58. Edin. Tests, Margaret Lauder, 10 June 1626; RPC, xiii, 586-7. This consortium included David McCall, Archibald Tod and James Nairn. By 1627 the St. John belonged to Patrick Ellis and Thomas Inglis. RPC, i, 1625-27, 570.

59. SRO, E71/29/9, 5 Feb. 1627, Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633. The Hopewell is described as being in Dysart.

60. Ibid., 8 Feb. 1643; SRO, E71/29/7, 11 July 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 15 Nov. 1622, 21 Jan., 28 Mar., 7 July 1623.

61. SRO, B22/8/9, 23 Apr. 1606. Purves purchased one-eighth of the ship in a group which included James Nisbet, Patrick Edgar, David Richardson, James McMath and Andrew Spier; Edin. Tests, Marion Cramond, 3 Jan. 1610.

Gabriel Ranken was one of a group which purchased a ship, called the Archangel, in Amsterdam in July 1620, and his one-eighth share of this vessel was valued at £1,000 ten months later.<sup>62</sup> John Ritchie exported goods a total of three times: once in February and again in April 1627 and once in January 1628 on the John, and owned shares in that ship in April 1632.<sup>63</sup> George Stirling had invested in a one-sixteenth share of the Andrew of Burntisland from at least 1636, and his share in this ship was valued at £500 in 1648.<sup>64</sup> Certainly some members of the elite found the owning of ships to be of enough value or convenience to warrant the expenditure of a considerable amount of capital on building them. James Arnot was given permission by Edinburgh town council to construct a dry-dock in 1638 at his own expense, although it is doubtful if sailing vessels were ever actually constructed under his auspices.<sup>65</sup>

It is clear that the owners of a ship were not themselves necessarily involved in using that vessel to transport their own goods, but chartered their ship to other merchants from whom they reaped considerable profits. The owners would charter their vessel and would be paid freight charges as well as a portion of the profits of the voyage. In 1598 Alexander

---

62. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 3 May 1622. No other member of the burgh elite was involved in the purchase. See also Edin. Tests, 27 Oct. 1621.

63. SRO, E71/29/9, 6 Feb., 15 Apr. 1627; SRO, E71/29/11, 29 Jan. 1628; Edin. Tests, 4 Sept. 1632.

64. SRO, GD 172/1752, 1755; Edin. Tests, 9 Dec. 1648. Both mention that the skipper was Robert Angus.

65. Edin. Recs., 1626-41, 199. Edward McMath, not a member of the elite, did build a ship in Leith between 1609-11, ECA, MSS, ETCR, xii, 8 Dec. 1609, 24 May 1611. McMillan states that no ships were built in Leith before 1671. See McMillan, *A Study of the Edinburgh Business Community*, 193.

Vaus, as one of the owners of the Grayhound, sued the master of that ship for the profits and freight charges of that vessel's voyages in 1594, when it had carried merchandise belonging to three other merchants to France.<sup>66</sup>

In 1626 James Loch, as owner of a one-sixteenth part of the Gift of God, sued Andrew Mitchell, master of the ship, for payment of his just sixteenth share of the freight charges and 'fee monies' made by that ship's voyages since October 1624.<sup>67</sup> Four years later Loch purchased a portion of the Archangel of Leith, with the stipulation that it should contain ... 'the hail ornaments and pertinents belonging to the ship as she was entered to the sea in her last voyage from Leith with al proffeit, benefit or comoditie to one sixteenth part...' which profits amounted to 100 marks.<sup>68</sup> In 1636 George Wauchope and George Stirling each received £75 as their one-sixteenth share of the profits made by the voyage of the Andrew of Burntisland, of which they were joint owners.<sup>69</sup>

The substantial profits which could be made from investing in charter ships made the capital investment required well worth while.<sup>70</sup> Certainly, the owners kept a watchful eye on their property. In 1636 George Wauchope and George Stirling endorsed

66. SRO, B22/8/9, 4 Sept. 1605.

67. ECA, DGCR, iv, 22 Feb. 1626. This sum amounted to over £1,000. In 1613 John Porterfield also sued the master of his ship for his profits (SRO, C57/279, 12 Mar. 1613).

68. ECA, DGCR, iv, 10, 20 Feb. 1630.

69. SRO, GD 172/1752.

70. In 1632 Alan Livingston was owed £150 for the profits of the voyages of the Blessing of God, £252 for the profits of the Blessing of Kirkcaldy and £20 for the profits of the Hopewell of Dysart. This was in addition to his ship shares (Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633).



a letter to the master of the Andrew directing him to sail to Dunkirk to purchase salt at a profitable rate which was them to be transported to Danzig for re-sale indicating not only their ability to respond promptly to market pressures, but also that there was, indeed, some semblance of direction and order behind the sailing of Scottish vessels, rather than as has been stated a haphazard sailing from port to port in search of profits.<sup>71</sup> When Patrick Ramsay, owner of the Gift of God, chartered that vessel to Walter Cant in 1618, he stipulated that Cant was to pay him £4 for each day which the Gift of God was to lie in Bordeaux harbour awaiting the loading of wines.<sup>72</sup> Obviously the owner of a ship was not to be held responsible either for the vessel lying idle while awaiting cargo or for the charges made for the crew's provisions during these periods of enforced stoppage. However, the owner-charterer was equally responsible for penalties if he did not keep his part of the bargain. In April 1605 Ninian McMorranne appealed to the privy council to have his ship excused from serving as part of the fleet being employed to sail to the Western Isles against the king's enemies there as the vessel had already been chartered by a group of Flemish merchants to sail to Spain under penalty of twenty crowns payable to them for each day in default after 20 April 1605.<sup>73</sup>

---

71. SRO, GD 172/1755; Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 125, 127.

72. ECA, DGCR, iii, 15 July 1618. See also Ibid., iv, 23 June 1624. When Mr. James Strachan chartered a vessel he was made responsible for the ship company's payments while in port. These charges could be substantial. A ship could carry at least twenty persons. See ECA, MSS, ETCR, xv, 27 Sept., 6 Oct. 1637.

73. RPC, vii, 36.

It is not easy to determine the share of responsibility between the owners of a ship and those chartering it in cases of either shipwreck or piracy.. A primitive form of ship insurance against shipwreck or piracy did exist in the early years of the seventeenth century but evidence of its use by the elite is rare. In 1619 William Cochrane chartered the Marie of Leith to sail to Plymouth and then to Cadiz in Spain. Fearing for the safety of his goods on board, worth some £6,000, due to piracy and the dangers of the sea, he insured this vessel for £600 sterling with Samuel Fortrie in London.<sup>74</sup> In most cases of piracy, however, the losses and the responsibility for the recovery of either goods or vessels seems to have been placed with those directly involved. Thomas Inglis was forced to sue before the privy council for the return of his ship, the Jonas of Leith, which had been taken by pirates in 1600 while fishing off Lewis.<sup>75</sup> In 1632 George Suttie and Thomas Moffet petitioned the king to appeal to the Infanta of Spain for recovery of their ship and goods which had been pirated by Dunkirkers, and were held at Ostend as booty.<sup>76</sup> The following year Suttie again, this time with Charles Hamilton, John Kniblo and Robert Glen, asked the king for aid in gaining restitution for the illegal arrestment of their ship and goods by Spanish freebooters.<sup>77</sup> In cases of shipwreck it would appear to have been the owners who were responsible for the loss. In 1609, the owners of the James of Queensferry, including Ninian McMorran

---

74. ECA, DGCR, iii, 7 Mar. 1621. No evidence of Edinburgh based ship insurers has been found. Smout discovered no evidence of ship insurance after 1660 until 1686 (Smout, Scottish Trade, 59).

75. RPC, vi, 169-70.

76. Ibid., iv, 1630-32, 452-3.

77. Ibid., v, 1633-5, 78-9.

and James Arnot, were involved in pursuing through the English Admiralty courts a case against an English skipper who, due to a collision, had sunk their ship with the loss of some £18,000.<sup>78</sup> However, when the Hope for Grace of Leith was wrecked off Bridlington in Yorkshire in 1613 it was the owners of the merchandise on board who were responsible for paying for the return of their goods.<sup>79</sup> In 1627 it was the owners of the St. John of Leith, who included Patrick Ellis and Thomas Inglis, who were responsible for going to Scarborough to ask for the return of their ship and the goods on board which had been wrecked there.<sup>80</sup>

Considerable evidence of the elite's involvement with the most simple of the forms of partnership, that of the commenda involving the employment of factors to work on their behalf, does exist between 1600 and 1638. Not only did the elite employ these factors to escort their merchandise to and from foreign ports, but they also regularly utilized the services of resident factors in cities throughout Europe. The wealthiest men of Edinburgh made use of factors in such places as Danzig, Dieppe, Bordeaux, Rouen, Paris, London, Bilbao and, above all, in Campvere. Their employment of these men allowed them the best opportunities possible to sell their goods to those with a practical knowledge of various European trading markets. It also gave Scottish merchants

---

78. Ibid., viii, 596-7.

79. ECA, DGCR, iii, 6 Apr. 1614. This included William Rae, Alexander Spier and Patrick Ellis.

80. RPC, i, 1625-27, 570.



a much-needed outlet to those men most able to exploit trading connections throughout the Continent. These long distance relations with financial partners, whom a merchant may never have met in person, aided the development and regular use within the elite's circles of various rudimentary forms of banking practices. These included letters of credit, transferable bonds the use of what could be viewed as effectively an overdraft facility as well as a comprehensive knowledge of the major European financial exchanges, brokerage systems and money markets. The use of factors in foreign cities was not, of course, an innovation of the early seventeenth century. Scottish merchants had employed factors to handle their goods in foreign cities, particularly when dealing with the Low Countries, from at least the fifteenth century.<sup>81</sup> By the late sixteenth century certain wealthy Edinburgh merchants employed factors resident in cities such as Campvere, Dieppe, Rouen, Bordeaux and Danzig; although this would not appear to have been the general practice.<sup>82</sup> The wealthiest of sixteenth-century Edinburgh merchants still conducted their businesses very much on a personal basis; travelled with their goods and bartered their produce at dockside in exchange for whatever sort of merchandise was available.<sup>83</sup> By the early seventeenth century, however,

---

81. Ewan, *The Burghesses of Fourteenth-Century Scotland*, 228, 233; Stevenson, *Scottish Trade with the Low Countries*, 158; W. Finlayson, *The Scottish Nation of Merchants in Bruges* (unpublished University of Glasgow Ph.D., 1951), 200-02.

82. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 190-91, makes only twenty-seven references to the use of factors. Most of them were in Dieppe and Campvere.

83. *Ibid.*, 192; Lythe, *The Economy of Scotland*, 128. William Birny did have factors in Dieppe and Campvere. Edin Tests, 9 Mar. 1568/9, 24 Nov. 1582.

Scottish merchants in general were, perhaps, expanding their trading horizons. Even two Dumfries merchants in 1600 employed factors; one in Campvere and the other in Dieppe.<sup>84</sup> Certainly it would have proved almost impossible for members of the Edinburgh elite to function effectively as merchants in the first four decades of the century if they had not made substantial use of factors, both residential and temporary.

The temporary hiring of men to escort and sell goods on behalf of a merchant was a common enough practice by members of the elite. This method of partnership should not be regarded as anything more than a one-off relationship in most cases. Unless a merchant had an apprentice or several to act for him on overseas voyages, the logistics of trading would require him to enter into this sort of relationship. Typical of these relations was that entered into by Joseph Marjoribanks in 1622. In October of that year he employed David Johnston as his factor to escort his goods, eighteen lasts of herring, to Bordeaux and there to purchase wine on his behalf. Johnston was to be paid five percent of the sale price of the herring as his commission.<sup>85</sup> In 1613 James Loch, Gabriel Ranken and Thomas Watson commissioned Archibald Martin, merchant, to act as their factor in the sale of their herring, which was to be exported to the Baltic.<sup>86</sup> More often, however, the elite relied upon the master of the

---

84. Coutts, *Social and Economic History of Dumfries 1600-1665*, 91-2, 94. It was more normal for Dumfries merchants to use Edinburgh merchants as their middlemen, and they may have used the same factors abroad as their Edinburgh contacts.

85. ECA, DGCR, iii, 19 Feb. 1623.

86. *Ibid.*, iii, 5 Jan. 1614. It does not state the rate of commission.

ship to transport their goods and deliver them safely into the hands of their resident factors. In 1615 Patrick Ramsay employed Andrew Ker, master of the Jerusalem of Leith, to transport his herring from Leith to Bordeaux at a rate of two crowns French per barrel.<sup>87</sup> Peter Mitchelson, master of the Orange Apple of Gothenburg, was employed as a factor to be responsible for Alexander Downie's goods shipped in that vessel to France in 1629.<sup>88</sup> In 1623 Mr. James Strachan's goods were sent to France and Spain with the master of the Archangel of Leith acting as the responsible agent until the merchandise was delivered to Strachan's resident factor in either Bordeaux or Bilbao.<sup>89</sup> This kind of partnership was, in the main, based upon the idea of mutual trust, which was not always borne out. In 1628 John Hilston employed John Brand, skipper of an unnamed ship, to transport 400 sheepskins to his factor in Campvere, David Peebles. However, during the voyage Brand cut open Hilston's pack and stole 100 of the skins, which he later sold as his own property.<sup>90</sup> In October 1629 Robert Clerk, master of the William, absconded with certain Holland cloth and silk, which John Kniblo's servant in Campvere had entrusted to him to deliver to Kniblo in Edinburgh.<sup>91</sup> However, on most occasions, these temporary arrangements would have worked satisfactorily

---

87. Ibid., iii, 10 May 1615.

88. Ibid., iv, 27 May 1629.

89. Ibid., iv, 23 June 1624.

90. Ibid., iv, 14 Jan. 1629.

91. Ibid., iv, 9 Dec. 1629.



and have provided a sound basis for the efficient functioning of the elite's trade.

The regular employment of factors permanently residing in important trading ports in Europe was a necessary part of the elite's mercantile practices. These factors were employed, in the main, to receive goods on behalf of their clients, store them until sale, and bargain for the best possible price. They were instructed either to retain the profit made until requested by the merchant, or to employ it upon the purchase of goods to be sent back. Their activities did, however, extend beyond this. They were also used as bankers, and through them it was possible for merchants to lend money in foreign cities. Members of the burgh elite made use of factors in a wide range of cities but appear to have preferred to hire the same men throughout the period. In Dieppe they made use of the Maill family, James and Michael, as well as James Harper and James Hope. In Bordeaux, John Shegray was employed along with Robert Brown, Jean Raoul, and Manuel Beaupré; in Danzig, Arthur Hutcheson; in London Archibald Boyle, John Johnston, Robert Inglis and Francis Dick; in Paris, Andrew Robertson, John Clerk and Andrew Beaton; in Rouen, David Blackburn; and in Bilbao James Brown. It was in Campvere that most of those members of the elite who traded overseas had a factor. A total of at least eight resident Scottish factors in Campvere were approved by the Convention of Royal Burghs, although by 1624 there were eleven. The elite, as a group, were most involved with the Weir family, William and James, although they also employed James and William

Wallace, James Ewing and Hector Paterson, at one time or another. Apart from the employment of Raoul and Beaupré in Bordeaux, the factors used by the elite tended to be expatriate Scots, perhaps even related to those employing them.<sup>92</sup>

Between 1600 and 1650 almost forty testaments of members of the burgh elite, a third of all of those considered to be regular overseas traders, make mention of the employment of factors abroad. In most of the evidence it is a case of the factor either owing the Edinburgh merchant money, probably profits from the sale of goods, or of holding stock belonging to him. The most striking - as well as the most typical - use made of factors by the elite was their connections with the Maill family in Dieppe, and the Weir and Wallace families in Campvere. The Maills had established themselves as the elite's factors in Dieppe from at least as early as 1613.<sup>93</sup> In that year Peter Somerville had £780 worth of wool, sheepskins and cloth in the hands of James Maill, and was owed £600 by Maill. Nine years later 300 sheepskins belonging to Somerville were in Maill's possession in Dieppe, indicating a long term relationship between the two men.<sup>94</sup> In 1617 Henry Morison was owed £5,000 for cloth hides and salmon he had sent to James Maill and James Hope in Dieppe.<sup>95</sup> The next year Edward Edgar was owed £3,691 by James

---

92. Hector Paterson, factor in Campvere, was William Paterson's brother. See SR0, B22/8/26, 14 Apr. 1630.

93. The factors used by Scots in Dieppe in the late sixteenth century were William Aikman and Harry Tod. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 191. Michael Maill was made an Edinburgh burgess and guildmember in 1653 as a result of his father's, presumably James Maill, work for Scottish merchants in Dieppe. Edin. Burq., 334.

94. Edin. Tests, Janet Waldie, 25 Feb. 1614; Margaret Stark, 24 Oct. 1635.

95. Ibid., Christian Dick, 30 Mar. 1619. Morison was owed £98 by Maill in Dieppe seven years later (Ibid., 19 Feb. 1624).

Maill; William Paterson was owed £151 that same year; in 1623 Lawrence Henderson had Galloway cloth and wool worth £2,400 stored in Dieppe with Maill and owed him some £500 for merchandise advanced by Maill to Edinburgh.<sup>96</sup> James Foreyth was owed £6,490 by Maill in 1625, equal to fifty-four percent of all debts owed to him; who also held £481 worth of Forsyth's salmon in Dieppe.<sup>97</sup> Although William Gray made use of James Maill in 1635 Maill must have passed the majority of his business dealings on to Michael, at about that time.<sup>98</sup> John Ritchie used Michael as his factor in Dieppe in 1632; Robert Carnegie employed him in 1636, as did Andrew Ainslie in 1645.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, the only evidence of any of the elite using a James Maill as their factor in Dieppe after 1635 is highly critical of Maill's performance of his duties, perhaps reflecting either Maill's age or the fact that a different James Maill had taken over. John Dougal had salmon, hides and plaiding in James's hands in Dieppe in July 1636. However, Dougal actually visited Maill there that month while on a European tour, but probably also out of dissatisfaction with Maill's services. For Dougal wrote to his factor in Paris, John Clerk, a month later that Maill was not paying him his profits at the appointed time and hoping that '... he [Maill] will do utherwayis utherwayis he will lose any imployment [Dougal] cane make him...'.<sup>100</sup> Just a year later a bitter and probably acrimonious dispute appears to have broken out between Dougal's

---

96. Ibid., 13 July 1619; Bessie Hamilton, 8 Jan. 1624.

97. Ibid., 5 Apr. 1626. The goods were owed in French livres at 22/- Scots per livre.

98. ECA, DGCR, iv, 27 July 1636.

99. Edin. Tests, 4 Sept. 1632; Barbara Mure, 5 Jan. 1637; 25 July 1648.

100. SRO, GD 18/2380/1/9, 12.



factors in Paris and Dieppe; with Maill accusing Clerk of withholding Dougal's money, which prompted Dougal to write to Clerk stating that although he could '... nocht hinder [Maill's] speaches, honest men neids nocht care for thame. I wold wishe he [Maill] would have als great a care to pay ... my moneyis as I heir he alledgis he does'.<sup>101</sup>

Dougal's problems with Maill continued into March 1638 when he was still awaiting payment of his money from that man.<sup>102</sup>

The Edinburgh elite were most likely to employ members of either the Weir or the Wallace families as their factors in Campvere. On the whole, their relationships were amicable. In 1625, when complaints were made against the Scottish factors in Campvere, the charges against the Weirs and the Wallaces were eventually dismissed.<sup>103</sup> It is not possible to determine exactly when members of these families first worked for the wealthiest men of the burgh, although a William Wallace had acted as a factor for an Edinburgh merchant in the late sixteenth century.<sup>104</sup> By 1612 William Weir was certainly the established factor for Richard and Robert Dobie, who were owed a total of £3,220 by him that year.<sup>105</sup>

In 1613 Weir also had £50 worth of hides belonging to Peter Somerville, and, in addition, owed him £500.<sup>106</sup> Nine years

---

101. SRO, GD 18/2380/1/28.

102. SRO, GD 18/2380/1/7. This James Maill may have been a different one. He is twice described as James Maill, younger. However, James Maill, Michael's father, was still alive in 1653. See above, n.93. Also see SRO, GD 18/2380/1/31.

103. Rooseboom, The Scottish Staple in the Netherlands, 165-6. Charges were also brought against Hector Paterson, William Paterson's brother. William was eventually forced to sell some of his Edinburgh property to make restitution to those bringing the charges (SRO, 822/8/26, 14 Apr., 13 July 1630).

104. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 191.

105. Edin. Tests., 17 Mar. 1613; 10 Apr. 1612.

106. Ibid., Janet Waldie, 25 Feb. 1614.

later Weir owed Somerville a total of £660, indicating the long term nature of their relationship.<sup>107</sup> Weir owed William Rae £286 in 1619, in addition to storing 2,000 merks worth of Rae's plaidings in Campvere; and in 1623 he had possession of £1,440 worth of plaiding and £480 worth of Galloway cloth belonging to Lawrence Henderson.<sup>108</sup> By the early 1630s James Weir, perhaps William's son, appears to have replaced him as the elite's factor in Campvere. In 1632 he acted as factor in Campvere for both John Ritchie and Alan Livingston; and he was also employed as factor for Charles Hamilton by 1640.<sup>109</sup> Members of the Wallace family were also employed as factors by members of the elite during these years, although not to as great a degree as were the Weirs. John Wallace acted for William Paterson in 1614; James Wallace advanced £1,000 to Lawrence Henderson in 1623, and William Wallace stored yarn and sheepskins for James Inglis in 1622 as well as lending him over £6,500.<sup>110</sup> James Ewing was employed to act as a factor by George Suttie by 1627, and had worked for John Ritchie some time before 1632.<sup>111</sup> The private

---

107. Ibid., Margaret Stark, 24 Oct. 1635.

108. Ibid., 28 Oct. 1619; Bessie Hamilton, 8 Jan. 1624.

109. Edin. Tests, 4 Sept. 1632; 30 Jan. 1633; 27 Mar. 1640.

110. ECA, DGCR, iii, 14 Aug. 1616; Edin. Tests, Bessie Hamilton, 8 Jan. 1624; 2 Jan. 1623.

111. Edin. Tests, Marion Blythe, 20 Feb. 1628; 4 Sept. 1632. Suttie was, himself, employed to act as a factor in Edinburgh for a Campvere merchant. SR0, B22/8/26, 27 Sept. 1630.

business connections made by members of the elite in other Dutch cities, and their subsequent reliance upon them, may, however, have affected their relationship with their factors in Campvere by the 1640s. Apart from Charles Hamilton's involvement in Campvere in 1640, thereafter no other elite member appears to have made much use of the services of a factor in that place. This displacement of Campvere was certainly accelerated by the disruptions caused by the wars in Scotland which dealt the Scottish factors residing there a severe economic blow, from which they were never to recover.<sup>112</sup>

The regular employment by members of the burgh elite of a factor permanently residing in Paris and London is, probably, the most significant indicator both of certain of these men's developing business sophistication, and of their growing desire to enter into trading links with the mainstream European commercial centres. At no time prior to the early years of the seventeenth century does any of the surviving evidence suggest significant, or regular financial transactions in these two cities on the part of Edinburgh's merchandisers.<sup>113</sup> There appears to have been a definite trend by the 1630s for some of the wealthiest of the Edinburgh merchant elite to have made use of their factors in London and Paris to provide a primitive banking system. Not only were the factors in these cities used in the traditional areas as receivers of the elite's goods, but they were also instructed to advance money in the name of the

---

112. Rooseboom, The Scottish Staple in the Netherlands, 181-2; see also above, pp 147-57.

113. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society' makes no mention of either of these cities as places of Scottish mercantile interest.



merchants to borrowers, and to grant notes of credit, as well as international money-transfers. There existed a direct financial link and systems of transferring the elite's funds between their factors in these cities. No evidence survives of these sorts of duties being performed for the elite by their factors in other European cities, not even by the factors in Campvere.

Only a handful, perhaps no more than half a dozen, of the elite actually employed resident-factors in London. The majority of traders with that city developed private business connections which did not require the services of a permanent factor.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, there is no evidence of the employment of an agent working for Scottish merchants in London prior to 1612 when one was employed by the Convention of Royal Burghs.<sup>115</sup> The traditional hostility felt by the English to the involvement of Scottish merchants in their country, combined with the failure to achieve any sort of commercial union after 1603, hindered the elite's efforts to establish themselves successfully in London. However, by 1616 William Dick's affairs in that city were sufficiently complex for him to pay his debts there through his factor, John Jossy.<sup>116</sup> Jossy was still employed by Dick in the early 1620s when he advanced money lent, at ten percent interest, by Dick to Thomas Kennedy of Bargany, but by 1626

---

114. See above, p. 203.

115. RCRB, ii, 379; iii, 25, 31; Edin Recs, 1604-26, 167. Robert Mure was employed in 1612 and replaced by Mr. John Brown in 1616. There is no evidence of the elite using either of these men.

116. ECA, DGCR, iii, 22 May 1616.

he was replaced as Dick's factor by David Muirhead.<sup>117</sup>

Muirhead continued advancing money for Dick's practice of money lending to Scots in the English capital, supplying some 1,600 merks in 1629 to Alexander Erskine of Cambuskenneth on Dick's behalf.<sup>118</sup>

Muirhead's relationship with Dick had ended by December 1631 when Dick employed Francis Dick as his resident factor in London. This association lasted until Francis Dick's death through consumption in 1636.<sup>119</sup>

Henry Morison had employed William Kilmanie as his factor in London by October 1622, but was owed £200 by Archibald Boyle - described as his factor in London - the following year.<sup>120</sup>

By 1634 Patrick Wood had secured the services of John Johnston to act as his resident factor in London. Wood operated a sophisticated service of both money lending and issuing of bonds payable upon fourteen, twenty, or forty-two days sight through his factor in London in 1637 and 1638.<sup>121</sup>

Wood must have invested a considerable amount of money on the London exchanges by the late 1630s for he spent several months in that city between 1636 and 1638, and complained that not only was he hard pressed to meet his bills there in 1637 but that actual access to money was scarcely to be had.<sup>122</sup>

Robert Inglis, a member of

---

117. GD 109/1411/1, 2. The principal total was 3,000 merks. Edin Recs, 1604-26, 295. Kennedy was related to Helen Kennedy, who had married the fourth earl of Eglintoun in 1583. (The Scots Peerage, iii, 443).

118. SRO, GD 30/1211/1, 2. Erskine was a son of John, seventh earl of Mar, and was in the 1620s at the court of Princess Elizabeth, ex-Queen of Bohemia, at the Hague, (the Scots Peerage, v, 621). Dick also lent money to Mr. John Sharp of Houston in London. NLS, Charters, 5677.

119. NLS, 83, no. 33; SRO, GD 18/2379/1/7.

120. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 25 Oct. 1622; Edin Tests, 19 Feb. 1624.

121. ECA, DGCR, iv, 19 Mar. 1634; SRO, GD 18/2379/2/8, 38.

122. SRO, GD 18/2379/2/14; SRO, GD 18/2368/84, 110, 114, 141. Wood was in London in March 1636.

the important Edinburgh merchant family, a successful English cloth importer in the late 1620s with connections in that trade to Gilbert Williamson, Patrick Wood and Archibald Sydsenf, and taxed as a member of the burgh elite in 1637; had settled in London by 1633 in order to act as factor for various members of the Edinburgh merchant community.<sup>123</sup>

Apart from transacting his own business deals, Inglis was employed to act as agent for members of the elite such as James Nasmyth, James Murray and John Sloan.<sup>124</sup> Inglis remained in regular contact with the Edinburgh merchant scene, and complained in 1636 that the unreliability of the postal system between it and London added unnecessary complications to his business dealings.<sup>125</sup> These included the regular issuing of bonds in the early 1630s which in effect granted the holder six to eight months' credit on the purchases which they made in London.<sup>126</sup> Inglis' main area of business, however, appears to have involved substantial commercial transactions with Paris. He dealt regularly with John Clerk in Paris from 1633; established commercial credit there by 1637 and 1638; and dealt in bonds of exchange payable at Paris in 1638, indeed at rates of exchange which

---

123. SRO, E71/29/9, 2 May 1627; SRO, E71/29/11, 10 Nov. 1627, 28 May, 1, 29 Aug. 1628; SRO, GD 18/2358/7. He had a house in Richmond in Aug. 1636. See SRO, GD 18/2368/61. In 1637 he was taxed in Edinburgh as being at London. See ECA, SR, 1637, N.W.3.

124. SRO, GD 18/2358/7, 29; SRO, GD 18/2377; SRO, GD 18/2379/2/3-5.

125. SRO, GD 18/2379/1/4, 6.

126. SRO, GD 18/2358/7-29.



Clerk considered most unfavourable to any chances of profitable business.<sup>127</sup> Inglis, like Wood, was, however, directly affected by adverse economic conditions prevailing in Scotland in late 1637. He wrote to Paris in December of that year complaining to Clerk that '... trewly the tymes are evill, & money is very skarse in Scotland...'.<sup>128</sup> He followed this letter in June 1638 with one bemoaning the lack of 'good bills' available on the London exchanges, stating that he '... could find none though I have imployed all the brokers on the exchange'.<sup>129</sup>

The elite had a considerable amount of capital investment in Paris by 1638. A larger number of Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants dealt with resident factors in Paris than London. This probably reflects not only the lack of private connections in the French capital but, perhaps, also the difficulties of language and physical distance; which did not exist to such a degree when merchandising in England. From as early as 1622 members of the burgh elite had employed factors in Paris. Evidence survives which shows that between 1622 and 1638 at least seventeen of the wealthiest men in Scotland had had some form of business connections in Paris. The factors' involvement there paralleled somewhat the activities of those in London, purchasing and receiving goods, offering credit, and also lending money in the name of their employers. Andrew

---

127. SRO, GD 18/2358/7; SRO, GD 18/2361/ff.29, 31, 33, 64; SRO, GD 18/2379/2/3, 25.

128. SRO, GD 18/2379/2/2.

129. SRO, GD 18/2379/2/24.

Beaton and John Clerk appear to have been employed as the elite's main Scots factors in Paris. Andrew Beaton was lending money in Paris in the names of William Dick, Peter Blackburn and Henry Morison in the early 1620s. Dick lent a total of £924 to Mr. John Sharp of Houston through Beaton between July 1622 and August 1624.<sup>130</sup> Sharp borrowed £210 from Blackburn in Paris in March 1623, which was not repaid in Edinburgh until July 1633.<sup>131</sup> In 1626 Blackburn further loaned Sharp over £1,100 through Beaton's services.<sup>132</sup> Henry Morison lent a total of £882 to Sharp in Paris between April and August 1623.<sup>133</sup> Dick again used Beaton's services to lend 300 merks to John Ramsay, in Paris in 1627.<sup>134</sup> In 1632 David Mitchell loaned almost 2,000 merks to Sir John Hamilton in Paris, using Beaton as his factor.<sup>135</sup> John Smith wrote to Beaton in 1634 instructing him to use the money which Smith sent to purchase merchandise in Paris and forward it to James Maill in Dieppe who would arrange for its transportation to Edinburgh.<sup>136</sup> It was part of Beaton's duties not only to arrange transfers of the elite's capital to and from Dieppe, Bordeaux or Campvere, but also to arrange for their introduction to those men best able to assist their

---

130. SRO, GD 30/1187; SRO, GD 30/1189, 1, 3, 4. All bonds were repaid in Edinburgh. All had penalty clauses and were charged an annual interest.

131. SRO, GD 30/1190. There was no interest charged.

132. SRO, GD 30/1207, 1210.

133. SRO, GD 30/1191/1, 3, 5. On his death Morison was owed £162 by Andrew Beaton, his factor in Paris. See Edin. Tests, 19 Feb. 1624.

134. SRO, GD 45/17/100.

135. SRO, GD 7/1/33/14.

136. SRO, GD 7/2/34.

business in towns where they had had no previous connections.<sup>137</sup>

However, by 1635 Beaton's relations with his Scottish clients became somewhat strained with various complaints being registered against him by the two main Scots factors in London that he not only failed to keep in regular contact with them but also did not discharge his duties adequately.<sup>138</sup>

John Clerk, an Edinburgh merchant, was employed in Paris from 1633.<sup>139</sup> He certainly appears to have replaced Beaton in

performing the elite's business by 1635; receiving funds for them from Dieppe and Campvere and allowing them credit in order to purchase goods.<sup>140</sup> John Smith drew bonds worth

£12,389 on Clerk in 1635 and transferred almost £12,000 from Dieppe to Paris, leaving himself in debt to Clerk that year. The following year, 1636, Smith drew almost £20,000 in Paris and transferred to there £21,564 from his factor in Dieppe; by December 1637 Smith owed Clerk £2,167 despite having attempted to cover his overdraft for that year by transferring £10,556 from Campvere and Dieppe.<sup>141</sup> John

Trotter, Robert Inglis, James Nasmith, Charles Hamilton, Lawrence Henderson, William Monteath, Thomas Moodie, James Murray, William Gray, John Dougal and Patrick Wood were all

137. SRO, GD 7/1/33/8. William Dick was not known in Bordeaux. He asked Beaton to arrange for his credit there with Jean Raoul in 1635. See also SRO, GD 7/2/39, Beaton received money from Dieppe in Dick's name in 1632. Also SRO, GD 7/1/33/9 arranged a transfer of money to Campvere.

138. Francis Dick and John Johnston complained about Beaton. See SRO, GD 7/1/33/11-13. Beaton may have retired about this time for he conducted no more business in Paris after 1635 and was resident in Edinburgh by 1642. See SRO, GD 7/1/33/18, 22; SRO, GD 7/2/89.

139. SRO, GD 18/2358/3.

140. SRO, GD 18/2361. Described as the Account Book of John Clerk.

141. SRO, GD 18/2361/ff. 1, 3, 4.



granted similar overdrafts and credit facilities between 1636 and 1638.<sup>142</sup>

Not only were these men purchasing merchandise but they were also substantially involved in money-lending or granting credit in Paris to other Edinburgh merchants. James Nasmith drew £1,133 6s. 8d. from Clerk on Patrick Wood's credit there in July 1636, as well as receiving a sum on John Trotter's account the same day.<sup>143</sup> Between January 1636 and December 1638 Clerk supplied loans in Wood's name amounting to a total of over £6,000 as well as 3,575 livres and 500 francs to various members of the Scottish gentry in Paris. These included John Dalmahoy, son of Sir John Dalmahoy of that ilk; Robert Hamilton of Binny; Daniel Carmichael, son of Sir James Carmichael, lord treasurer depute; Mr. Archibald Campbell, nephew of the laird of Lawers; Sir John Hamilton of Trabroun; Thomas Ogilvie, son of Lord Ogilvie; and John Scott, son of Sir John Scott of Scotstarvit.<sup>144</sup> Wood's money lending in Paris through Clerk was important enough to him in March 1637 for him to chide Clerk for ill manners in making Wood's customers endorse their bonds in front of him before handing over the loan, for this practice reflected badly

---

142. SRO, GD 18/2361/ff. 12, 15, 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 38, 40, 40a, 41, 42, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 60, 64, 70, 72. In most cases the debits and credits balanced. See also SRO, GD 18/2368/40, 41. Credit was available in Dieppe. See ECA, DGCR, iii, 15 May 1616. Credit was available in Campvere. In 1622 Peter Somerville advanced £100 Flemish to Charles Hamilton. See Edin. Tests, Margaret Stark, 24 Oct. 1635.

143. SRO, GD 18/2361/ff. 22, 24; SRO, GD 18/2368/3. Patrick Wood also lent £300 to William Monteath.

144. SRO, GD 18/2368/2, 4-9, 11, 13-15, 23, 30-32. All were charged interest and penalties.

on Wood.<sup>145</sup> Wood, however, expressed some favour with Clerk in May of that year by offering him a commission of two and a half percent to work as his factor and stating that '[Wood] wold be loth to imploy another having found you soe really honest'.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, by August Wood again brought Clerk to task not only for drawing upon Wood's credit at an unprofitable rate of interest, but also for not first consulting Wood.<sup>147</sup> The relationship between these two men was deemed important enough by John Dougal for him to write to Clerk in December 1638 informing him, within an hour of the event, of Wood's death.<sup>148</sup>

John Dougal also made use of Clerk's financial connections throughout Europe to use him as a banker in the late 1630s. Dougal regularly transferred his funds from Dieppe to Paris, causing a feeling of ill will between his two factors in these two places.<sup>149</sup> He used his credit with Clerk to lend money in Paris. A certain amount of rivalry developed between Patrick Wood and Dougal in this field of enterprise. In January 1635 Dougal wrote to Clerk that Sir Alexander Seton, son of the third earl of Winton, had complained of the rate of exchange offered by Clerk in Dougal's name of forty in the

---

145. SRO, GD 18/2368/103.

146. SRO, GD 18/2368/110-11, 114. The usual commission was one to one and one-half percent.

147. SRO, GD 18/2368/117.

148. SRO, GD 18/2380/2/27. Wood was owed £600 in Clerk's hands in Paris at the time of his death. See Edin. Tests, 26 May 1640. Wood was also owed £3,826 16s. by Samuel Lockhart, his factor in France. See ibid., 10 Sept. 1640.

149. See above pp. 140-41. Also see SRO, GD 18/2380/1/1, 14.

hundred between Paris and Rome. Wood apparently had offered ten in the hundred between London and Rome. Dougal begged Clerk to give Seton his money as cheaply as possible '... without any gaine or commoditie thairon for it will make my lord Winton to take some uther be the hand to furnish his sone'.<sup>150</sup> Clerk obviously disputed this decision for less than a fortnight later Dougal again wrote to him on the matter stressing that '... otheris also complain of your [Clerk's] hard and stark dealing...'.<sup>151</sup> However, Clerk performed the more usual tasks of a factor for Dougal adequately: receiving Dougal's funds from Dieppe, La Rochelle, Caen, Bilbao and south Spain; in addition to dispatching money to Dougal's factor in Bordeaux on his behalf and the partnership between the two men seems to have continued unharmed.<sup>152</sup> From the evidence which survives of the elite's business transactions on the Continent a certain degree of business acumen and sophistication can be assumed. Through their factors they were made aware of such devices as letters of credit, bills of exchange and transfer, as well as the profits to be made on the international money lending scene, and they made good use of all of these ways of making a profit. Certainly, evidence survives for this sort of involvement

---

150. SRO, GD 18/2380/2/2.

151. SRO, GD 18/2380/2/4.

152. SRO, GD 18/2380/2/5, 8-11, 13.



for only a handful of the wealthiest men of Edinburgh. However, the character of their transactions in London and Paris does indicate a closer alignment of the Scottish economy in the late 1630s with the mainstream European money markets than had existed at any time in the sixteenth century or was to again, until the early years of the eighteenth.<sup>153</sup>

The first forty years of the seventeenth century witnessed the elite's involvement in two other forms of investment which were to a marked degree a departure from their traditional merchandising roles and an additional sign of their growing economic sophistication. To a limited extent various members of the elite began to speculate on what might be loosely termed as the commodity market - most notably involving the purchasing of grain futures. In addition to this, capital began to be channelled into investments which involved manufacturing. Evidence survives of no more than twenty merchants involved in the purchase of grain futures and of perhaps half that number in manufactories. Nevertheless, involvement by the burgh elite in these fields, even if to a limited extent, is a sufficiently different means of investment to warrant examination.

Any explanation of the idea that members of the burgh elite were involved in speculation on the commodities market is hindered by the fact that no evidence survives of the existence in Edinburgh of any sort of formalized stock market

---

153. Devine, 'The merchant class of the larger Scottish towns', 106; Devine, 'The Scottish merchant community', 33-4.

or bourse. These sorts of deals appear to be merely private agreements between a purchaser and a seller and certainly the employment of anyone who could be termed as a broker is not visible. . However, it would appear that some of the elite were involved in speculative purchases mostly dealing with cereal crops. These purchases also seem to be separate from the involvement in the grain market which stemmed from the purchase of the wadset of rural property and the right to the profits of the land. In 1615 John Morison was owed £248 worth of bear and wheat by Sir John Preston, £184 worth of grain by James Hepburn in Sighthill and he had no connection with the lands of either of these two men.<sup>154</sup> John Barclay, who did not hold the wadset of any rural property, had purchased by the time of his death in 1615 the right to the crops for the years 1613 to 1616 of the lands of Sir George Cairne of Garviltoun, Robert Innes of Innermarkie, Alexander Burnet of Leyls and Walter Innes.<sup>155</sup> In 1628 Robert Home of Heuch sold to William Dick the crops of his land from that year until 1632.<sup>156</sup> Indeed by 1642 Dick was owed 150,000 merks in victual bonds.<sup>157</sup> William Gray purchased bear from Lord Forrester which was to be paid out of the crops of 1633.<sup>158</sup> Patrick Wood, in 1637,

---

154. Edin. Tests, 17 July 1615.

155. Ibid., 21 Dec. 1616.

156. SR0, GD 110/209.

157. SR0, GD 331/28/31.

158. SR0, GD 150/3030-32.

purchased the right to the crops from 1636 to 1639 of the countess of Home's land.<sup>159</sup> However, these purchases do appear to be somewhat unusual. If a merchant wished to assure the right to purchase grain it was more likely that he would invest in the wadset of a rural property.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, the speculative purchase of grain futures did occur indicating that the elite were willing to take certain risks in investing their capital - not only assuming that the crops would grow and be delivered to them, but also that their initial investment would be profitably rewarded.<sup>161</sup>

The involvement in industrial pursuits also indicates a willingness on the part of certain members of the elite to gamble with their capital; something, it has been stated, their forefathers would not have ventured.<sup>162</sup> These speculations included the investment of considerable sums of money in mining, both of lead and coal; salt pans; herring-curing; cloth-making; beer and vinegar brewing and rope-making. A recent examination of the manufactory movement in early modern Scotland has demonstrated, to a limited extent, that manufacturing enterprises of any note were established for the first time throughout the country and that ... 'the spirit of modern capitalism was present and increasingly influential in seventeenth-century Scotland'.<sup>163</sup> The

---

159. NLS, Charter 5317.

160. See chapter seven.

161. Selling grain was profitable. See ECA, MSS, ETCR, iii, 14, 16 Jan. 1624.

162. Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 87. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society' makes no mention of any investment in industry or manufacturing.

163. G. Marshall, Presbyteries and Profits (Oxford, 1982), 129.



attempts in the early seventeenth century, however, were hindered by the lack of a clear-cut commercial policy in Scotland and the unsystematic and haphazard legislation enacted by parliament, privy council and the Convention of Royal Burghs to encourage manufacturing.<sup>164</sup> The study found only twenty-four attempts at either establishing manufacturing enterprises or purchasing monopolies in Scotland between 1587 and 1642.<sup>165</sup> These included attempts to manufacture paper, pottery, glass, iron and process wool as well as the purchasing of sugar and soap monopolies, many of which were notable only for their eventual lack of success. Of these twenty-four attempts at enterprises some six were established within Edinburgh or its environs, and only one directly concerned a member of the burgh elite.<sup>166</sup> Certainly, the elite regarded attempts at establishing industries as worthwhile, if only as a means of ridding the town of the burden of caring for the poor by creating employment for them. William Rig left 15,000 merks to the town council in 1619 to be employed on setting the poor of the burgh to crafts and John Trotter, twenty-two years later, left the town a legacy of

---

164. Ibid., 131. The legislation was in the main protectionist, forbidding the export of raw materials rather than encouraging the development of industry. Statutes in 1625 and 1633 did try to encourage the setting up of manufactories. See, Lythe, The Economy of Scotland, 90-98; APS, iii, 221; iv, 135-6; v, 178, 615. Not until 1641 was a more systematic legislation followed.

165. Marshall, Presbyteries and Profits, 284-90.

166. Ibid., 287. This was Patrick Hamilton's sugar patent in 1619. There is no evidence of any works having been built.

4,000 marks to set up factories of work for the poor.<sup>167</sup>  
 At least twenty of the burgh's wealthiest merchants were involved, either singly or as members of combines, in the investing of their capital in manufacturing between 1600 and 1635. As with speculation in grain futures this investment in industry was not a part of every merchant's endeavours, but does indicate a certain willingness to branch away from the more usual day-to-day merchandising practices.

The most substantial, as well as the most profitable, investment in manufacturing on the part of the burgh elite, was probably in that form which could be regarded as 'heavy industries' - coal or lead<sup>ore</sup>/mining and salt making. A small group of Edinburgh merchants invested in these manufactories. The extraction of lead<sup>ore</sup>/in Scotland in the early years of the seventeenth century was almost exclusively in the hands of a member of the burgh elite. In 1590 Thomas Foulis, an Edinburgh goldsmith and Master of the Mint, was granted the right to mine lead<sup>ore</sup>/from Leadhills in Lanarkshire, described as the most important lead<sup>ore</sup>/mine in Scotland and the only working lead mine by the time of the Civil Wars, producing 300-400 tons of lead<sup>ore</sup>/per year.<sup>168</sup> By 1613, however, this investment involved the partnership of John Fairlie, who seems to have become the senior partner in the mine. At the time of his death in 1620 Fairlie had £8,100 invested

---

167. Edin. Tests, 18 Aug. 1620; 8 Mar. 1642. St. Paul's Work was set up in 1619. See above, pp.90-94; Edin. Recs. 1604-26, 198-202.

168. T.C. Smout, 'Lead mining in Scotland, 1650-1850', in P. Payne (ed.), Studies in Scottish Business History (London, 1967), 104.

in the mine at Leadhill, and was owed 500 merks by David Foulis, son of Thomas Foulis, in Leadhill.<sup>169</sup> A charge made against Fairlie's estate in 1621 claimed that Ninian and John McMorranes had combined with Fairlie to sell lead<sup>ore</sup> in Middelburg from 1613.<sup>170</sup> Three contracts entered into between April 1613 and December 1614 gave the McMorranes the right to two-thirds of the profits made on the sale of 115,000 stones of lead<sup>ore</sup> in Middelburg. Fairlie did pay them £10,888 Flemish but owed them a further £11,329 16s. Scots in 1621. A further contract of December 1618 made between these men to deliver 63,000 stones of lead to Middelburg resulted in the McMorranes being owed a further £20,000.<sup>171</sup> Fairlie also borrowed money from the MacMorranes to fund these lead deals and they were owed in total over £42,000 by Fairlie's estates as their share of the business.<sup>172</sup> In addition to supplying at least 178,000 stones of lead<sup>ore</sup> to a foreign market between 1613 and 1620 Fairlie was contracted to furnish lead for the refurbishment of Linlithgow Palace in July 1620, and had disbursed some £3,600 towards this before his death in September of that year.<sup>173</sup> From the evidence of the amount of lead<sup>ore</sup> sold by Fairlie in the 1610s it can be argued that if Leadhills was either the only lead producing mine in the country, or even the largest, with a maximum

---

169. Edin. Tests, 15 Mar. 1621. The £8,100 represented thirty-seven percent of his inventory's worth and twenty-eight percent of his total worth.

170. SR0, GD 237/216/4/12.

171. Lead<sup>ore</sup> was supplied to Middelburg from 1619 to 1620 in installments. See SR0, GD 237/216/4/30.

172. Ibid. This must have been paid prior to the registration of Fairlie's testament as it is not recorded. See Edin. Tests, 15 Mar. 1621.

173. Ibid.; RPC, xii, 335.



capacity of producing 400 tons of lead<sup>ore</sup>/per annum, a substantial part of its produce was controlled and sold by members of the burgh elite, who were capable of making substantial profits from its workings.

To a lesser extent the elite were also involved in investing in the production of salt and the mining of coal, particularly along the Forth coast and in Fife. Already by 1606 John Porterfield owned two salt pans in Culross and two in Kincardine.<sup>174</sup> Four years later a further salt pan had been acquired by Porterfield in Kincardine.<sup>175</sup> Edward Edgar had invested £4,200 in purchasing 700 chalders of coal from Andrew Wardlaw of Torryburn's lands in Fife in 1610, although Edgar may not have been involved in the actual production of the coal.<sup>176</sup> In 1632 Peter Blackburn was in possession of an annual payment of 500 merks by Sir John Blackadder out of the lands of Tulliallan, Fife, with the explicitly stated right to the coal and salt of the lands.<sup>177</sup> Two years later a combine of Edinburgh merchants, including seven elite members, purchased the right to 250,000 bolls of salt produced from the lands to be produced by 1639.<sup>178</sup> Again, there is no proof that any of these men were directly involved

---

174. SR0, B22/8/9, 1 July 1606. He was connected to Culross. See G. Donaldson, 'The Historic Trading Links Between the Towns of Veere and Culross' (unpublished pamphlet).

175. SR0, C57/283, 31 July 1613.

176. RPC, x, 25.

177. RMS, viii, 2198.

178. Ibid., ix, 68. See also RPC, viii, 1544-1660, 459.

in the actual production of the salt. Patrick Wood, one of the combine, had been regularly involved in the salt trade from 1629 when he sold 10,000 bolls of salt produced at Torryburn to merchants in London.<sup>179</sup> He shipped more salt to London in 1634, although this shipment may have been in part payment of the 1629 contract.<sup>180</sup> At the time of his death in 1638, however, Wood had investments worth £14,200 in salt pans and £3,846 in coal.<sup>181</sup> By 1642 William Dick had invested 150,000 merks in coal and salt works.<sup>182</sup> It would appear that the most important salt pans of Fife in the early seventeenth century - those in Culross, Kirkcaldy, Torryburn and Tulliallan<sup>183</sup> - were all invested in by members of the Edinburgh merchant elite. Indeed, the boom in the production of salt in these very areas in the first three decades of the century may have been directly as a result of the capital investment of these Edinburgh merchants. Certainly when the Fife salt industry entered into a period of recession in the late 1630s it was at a time when Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants were also beginning to feel hard pressed financially.<sup>184</sup>

---

179. SRO, GD 15/475. Coal was also bought from Torryburn (SRO, GD 15/491).

180. ECA, DGCR, iv, 19 Mar. 1634.

181. Edin. Tests, 22 Mar. 1639. The salt pans were in Cockenzie, Prestonpans, Kirkcaldy, Bo'ness, Gullane and Burntisland. The coal was in Limekilns.

182. SRO, GD 331/28/3. The locations are not stated.

183. C.A. Whatley, That Important and Necessary Article; The Salt Industry and its Trade in Fife and Tayside, c 1570-1850 (Abertay Historical Society Publications, no. 22, 1984), 24-6.

184. Ibid., 26-7.

The fishing industry, and most notably the curing and packing of herring, was another field in which certain members of the elite invested before 1638. The sale of cured and packed fish, whether herring or salmon, was a staple export product of Scotland from the reign of James I.<sup>185</sup> While the curing and sale of fish was not a major element of the Edinburgh elite's export trade, it was an industry in which they had invested from at least 1600. Thomas Inglis employed a fishing boat off Lewis that year.<sup>186</sup> However, the single largest industrial investment in the herring trade by the elite came from a consortium involving three of the burgh's wealthiest merchants - Joseph Marjoribanks, James Arnot and George Todrig - in 1615.<sup>187</sup> That year these merchants complained before both the privy council and the Convention of Royal Burghs that although they had purchased the right to make red herring '... within all the seyes, loches, waters, ports, schors and land thair of betwix Twedmouth and Pientland Firth...' for twenty-one years, Archibald Campbell, who was not a merchant and therefore not entitled to the right, also claimed this monopoly.<sup>188</sup> The partners claimed that they had spent a considerable amount of their money not only in establishing

---

185. Guy, *The Scottish Export Trade*, 111-34. Aberdeen was the most important fish exporting burgh. Even in the 1590s Edinburgh exported only about twenty-five percent overall of fish exported from the country (*ibid.*, 116).

186. *RPC*, vi, 169-70.

187. Arnot and Todrig were herring exporters before 1615. See SR0, E71/29/6, 12 Dec. 1611; *RCRB*, ii, 408. Marjoribanks exported herring in the 1620s. See SR0, E71/29/9, 19 Sept. 1627.

188. *RCRB*, ii, 26-7; *RPC*, x, 436-9.



a herring curing and packing factory in Dunbar, but also had disbursed 2,000 merks in bringing skilled foreign workers to be employed at this trade.<sup>189</sup> The dispute was settled by both sides agreeing to renounce their monopolies; but the Edinburgh partnership did so in return for the right to collect certain taxes on herring.<sup>190</sup> However, this impost was cancelled in 1617, seemingly due to the protests of the Dunbar herring curers.<sup>191</sup> In 1619 it was recognized by the Convention of Royal Burghs that the protests were, in fact, orchestrated by two merchants, one of whom was Thomas Inglis, rivals to the partnership in the herring trade and Marjoribanks and partners were restored to their monopoly.<sup>192</sup> The Dunbar enterprise must have flourished well into the 1620s, attracting to it other Edinburgh merchants. In 1623 Henry Morison had an investment in red herring in Dunbar with Marjoribanks worth £800, and Patrick Ramsay had sixteen lasts of herring stored in Leith and Dunbar that same year.<sup>193</sup> According to the account made by the 'General Gadger' of herring in 1624 Marjoribanks and three other members of the Edinburgh elite had herring stored at Dunbar that year.<sup>194</sup> Although various members of the elite were

---

189. RCRB, ii, 26-7.

190. Ibid., iii, 26-7. The tax was the right to collect 10/- for each barrel containing 1,000 red herring throughout Scotland.

191. Ibid., iii, 34, 67, 72.

192. Ibid., iii, 88-9.

193. Edin. Tests, 19 Feb. 1624. Morison was in partnership with Nicol Udard and George Leslie. In 1635 Marjoribanks had no property or goods in Dunbar (Edin. Tests, 2 July 1636).

194. ECA, Compt. of the General Gadger. The other elite members were Thomas Gladstone, John Trotter and John Sinclair. There were three other Edinburgh merchants, not of the elite, listed.

involved in exporting cured fish and salmon only one other merchant can rival the investment made by Marjoribanks and his partners in Dunbar. By 1642 William Dick owned a herring works in Dunbar worth 60,000 merks.<sup>195</sup> These appear to be the only attempts made at the industrial processing of herring by Edinburgh's merchant princes in the early seventeenth century but they probably account for a substantial part of the twenty-five percent of all fish which was exported through the burgh at that time.<sup>196</sup>

Within Edinburgh itself members of the elite were involved in a substantial beer brewing industry by the 1630s. In 1596 Edinburgh town council decreed that a society brewing beer should be set up due to the lack of any such industry in the town.<sup>197</sup> In February 1597/8 a Society of eighteen merchants was contracted by the council to establish this industry in Edinburgh, and its premises were constructed at Greyfriars Port.<sup>198</sup> In 1603 Patrick Cochrane and John Jackson acted as suretors for the society.<sup>199</sup> In 1611 James Nisbet purchased five bags of hops worth £600 on behalf of the Society, and in 1612 George Todrig was amongst those responsible for paying the Society's rent.<sup>200</sup> In 1616 Alexander Miller was owed £581 by the Society of Brewing beside the Greyfriars Port.<sup>201</sup>

---

195. SRO, GD 331/28/3. He perhaps purchased Marjoribanks' factory.

196. Guy, *The Scottish Export Trade*, 116.

197. Edin. Recs., 1593-1604, 158.

198. Ibid., 213, 216. Alexander and James McMath were involved.

199. Ibid., 321.

200. SRO, CS7/277, 22 Jan. 1613; SRO, CS7/285, 20 Nov. 1613; SRO, CS7/279, 12 Mar. 1613.

201. Edin. Tests, 14 July 1617.

In 1618 the town council purchased the Society's property at Greyfriars for 40,000 merks not only because of certain difficulties with the water supply, but also because of the proposed construction there of a new church.<sup>202</sup> The Society, at that time belonging to Ninian and James McMorran, James Nisbet, John Fairlie, James Inglis, James and William McMath, and Walter Finlayson - all members of the burgh elite - was to be removed to Leith by June 1619.<sup>203</sup> In 1627 the Society and its property - consisting of a dwellinghouse, brewhouse, kilns, barns and arable lands - were set in tack for five years to William Dick for 4,400 merks, and the tack was renewed in 1632 for a further five years for 4,000 merks.<sup>204</sup> Dick made a profitable business of this brewery: in July 1630 he was owed £257 15s. 8d. for beer supplied to Helen Brown; in September he was owed £6 sterling for beer by Elizabeth Halking; and in November of that year Dick discharged his clerk for payment to him of all sums owed to the Society to October of that year amounting to £16,000.<sup>205</sup> In December 1637 Dick was owed a total of £4,783, plus penalties, for beer which he had supplied to various Edinburgh taverners.<sup>206</sup> By 1642 Dick's 60,000 merks, and a further

---

202. Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 172, 173, 174, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, 203, 209.

203. ECA, DGCR, iii, 29 July 1618; Edin. Recs., 1604-26, 191.

204. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiv, 28 Nov. 1627, 28 Sept. 1632. John Trotter also had a brewery in Leith in 1630 worth £10,000. See Edin. Tests, Janet McMath, 18 Mar. 1631.

205. SR0, B22/8/26, 16 July, 11 Sept., 6 Nov. 1630; SR0, B22/8/29, 19 Feb. 1636.

206. Ibid., 6, 8, 12, 15, 18, 22 Dec. 1637; SR0, B22/8/30, 21, 28 July 1638.



40,000 merks was tied up in victual pertaining to that industry.<sup>207</sup> While other attempts at manufacturing within the burgh were tried none were probably as successful as Dick's brewery.

Attempts were made by the elite to manufacture cloth, establish timberyards, vinegar works and rope works during the first four decades of the century. However, there is no direct evidence that any of these industries were either long lasting or ultimately profitable. In 1600 the privy council had recognized the need to stimulate the Scottish clothmaking industry and established a committee to consider and report on the problems of that endeavour.<sup>208</sup> Nicol Udard and Henry Nisbet sat on the committee, and a direct result of its decisions may have been the attempt in 1601 to implant Flemish clothmakers from Norwich in Edinburgh.<sup>209</sup> Although some cloth was produced, this particular scheme had collapsed by 1619.<sup>210</sup> Clothmaking may then have been undertaken at St. Paul's Work, which was established that year, but there is no direct evidence of the elite's encouragement and monetary participation in this industry. The only direct evidence of a member of the elite investing in the cloth industry is that of Alan Livingston who, in 1632, was bound to pay Thomas Beg £1,800 for stock to

---

207. SRO, GD 331/28/3.

208. RPC, vi, 98,

209. Ibid.; RCRB, iii, 118-9.

210. RPC, vi, 123; Edin. Recs., 1589-1603, 287, 290, 292, 297.

advance their work of clothmaking in Canonmills.<sup>211</sup>

Other efforts in manufactories by the elite included

Andrew Ainslie's three timberyards in Leith in 1622;

Thomas Inglis and Andrew Hart's attempts, in 1615, to

print a vernacular Scots bible; Alan Livingston's vinegar

works in Leith, worth £1,100 in 1632; and William Dick's

soapworks, worth 30,000 merks in 1642.<sup>212</sup> Patrick Wood,

just months before his death in 1638, had established a

rope works in Newhaven, to the west of the town, and had

built workmen's houses.<sup>213</sup> His investment in this,

probably the last significant industrial effort in the

burgh before the Wars of the Covenant, was worth £54,422,

an outstanding sum even for one of the burgh's wealthiest

entrepreneurs.<sup>214</sup>

It may be argued that by 1638 Edinburgh's wealthiest

merchants were involved in many of the most important

mechanisms of economic life. They established

partnerships; they speculated on what could be loosely

---

211. Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633.

212. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xiii, 30 Jan 1622; ECA, DGCR, iii, 8 Feb. 1615. 1,000 copies of the bible were printed ten years before the Welsh London-based merchants produced 'y Bibel bach'; Edin. Tests., 30 Jan. 1633; SRO, GD 331/28/3. I am grateful to Dr. M. Lynch for the information about the Welsh bible. Hart's bible is not mentioned in H.G. Aldis, A List of Books Printed in Scotland before 1700 (Edinburgh, 1970).

213. ECA, MSS, ETCR, xv, 9 Feb. 1638.

214. Edin. Tests, 22 Mar. 1639, 29 June 1647.

termed as a stock-market; they developed a commercial shipowning and chartering business; they invested in small scale industrial efforts; and were well aware of the niceties of, and profits to be made from, involvement in the mainstream European money and banking markets. Indeed, their vitality was recognized by the proposal in 1637 to establish a merchant company in Edinburgh, similar to the Merchant Adventurers of London.<sup>215</sup> However, the very success of Edinburgh's great merchants in these fields, and the considerable amount of capital which they tied up in them, was to undermine their chances of successfully surviving the economic and political storms of the 1640s. Certainly, Edinburgh's merchant princes appear to have felt an economic pinch from as early as 1637, when various members of the elite found it difficult not only to extend credit, but also to attain it for their own purposes. A flurry of letters from Edinburgh counting houses recalling loans, and bemoaning the general fiscal scene outline this problem.<sup>216</sup> It is probable that at no time prior to 1600 had the economic prosperity of the country been so much in the hands of a small group. This was a group of men precariously living on credit, expecting future benefits from their investments, and maintaining large overdrafts in foreign cities. Nevertheless, a coterie existed within Edinburgh by 1638 whose investments in these areas proves the dynamism of the economy up to that point - a dynamism it was not to recover even in the later years of the seventeenth century.

---

215. Edin. Recs., 1626-41, p. xv.

216. See above, pp. 165, 173.



## CHAPTER FIVE

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MONEYLENDING

The first half of the seventeenth century witnessed in Scotland in general and in Edinburgh in particular a dramatic shift in the ways in which the mercantile classes made their money. Apart from the usual methods of merchandising and retailing commodities the urban elite of the burgh began, perhaps for the first time in any substantial fashion, to rely on the extra income produced by lending money. The accepted opinion on the credit structure and workings of seventeenth-century Scottish merchants has always been similar to that which has been applied to fourteenth-century English merchants, that not only were they not involved in money-lending but had also no recourse to any sort of borrowing.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it has been recently implied that sophisticated mercantile credit techniques were developed in Scotland only in the latter years of the seventeenth century and were even then at best of limited use within the domestic economy.<sup>2</sup> If these opinions are accepted, then the economic bases from which early seventeenth-century Edinburgh merchants functioned must have then been both severely limited and financially unsound. In a growing economy no merchant could operate a successful business without resorting to the borrowing of money to overcome both short and long-term financial crises.

---

1. Postan, Medieval Trade and Society, 30. The idea that fourteenth-century English merchants had no use of credit facilities is somewhat of an exaggeration.

2. Devine, 'The Scottish merchant community', 32; Devine, 'The merchant class of the larger Scottish towns', 106.

Few merchants with an eye to monetary returns would either miss the opportunity to lent their surplus capital or to make profitable use of others' cash. This is borne out by an examination of the elite's testaments, in particular, but also of their surviving private business papers as well as the Burgh Registers of Deeds and the Registers of the Privy Council. By 1638 Edinburgh's wealthiest merchants were certainly heavily involved in money-lending, and the methods by which they calculated their rate of interest was becoming both increasingly complicated and sophisticated. In many ways the economic basis of the realm's richest men in the first forty years of the century was becoming an artificial one - for it was increasingly becoming wealth based on paper debts. The financial crises of the Wars of the Covenant were to underline the inherent instability of the Scottish economy and highlight the somewhat artificial nature of the nation's wealthiest merchants' fortunes.

Income earned from 'lent-money' in the early years of the seventeenth century throughout Scotland was becoming of ever increasing importance not only to those investing in this form of money-making but also to the crown. The very fact that an extraordinary tax on the profits of money lent since 1619 was first introduced in 1621 serves to indicate that by then money-lending was not only a widespread but also a profitable investment.<sup>3</sup> Certainly the extra burden of this unusual taxation upon the profits of lent-money must have caused considerable resentment on the part of those lending money - for the most part burgesses - for various

---

3. See below, p. 366.

protests against the tax were recorded and considerable difficulties were placed in the way of those charged with the assessment and collection of the tax.<sup>4</sup> It would have been a simple matter to disguise interest charged on personal bonds. Having seized upon a form of taxation which was of considerable profit, the crown was reluctant to abandon it. The tax was repeated in 1625, 1630 and 1635.<sup>5</sup> Rather than pay what would have been a considerable sum the Edinburgh merchant community agreed instead to a voluntary contribution to the crown of £40,000 spread over four years.<sup>6</sup> The tax was certainly collected in other areas of Scotland, notably in Fife, and in 1630 a roll of Aberdeen money-lenders was produced.<sup>7</sup>

It was generally recognized that excessive profits were being made by money-lending. This is indicated not only by the various acts of the privy council against usury and the prosecutions before it of merchants charged with that crime but also by the attempts made to establish a nation-wide and legal rate of interest.<sup>8</sup> The established rate of interest charged on lent money had always revolved around the biblically allowed ten percent, although this had no legal sanction. In 1633, however, the interest rates were lowered by an act of parliament from ten to eight percent. The

4. Maidment, Melros Papers, ii, 423-4; Rait, The Parliaments of Scotland, 494 states that the tax was to be five percent of all monies earned by money-lending.
5. RPC, iv, (1630-2), 382-3, 469-70.
6. See below, p. 364. The tax was expected to raise at least £230,000 p.a. throughout the country.
7. MacNiven, Merchant and Trader, 229; St. Andrews University Muniments, Inventories of the Sums of Money Award to the Inhabitants of St Andrews 1630-33, 865/20/1. I am grateful to Dr. M. Lynch for drawing my attention to this volume.
8. APS, iv, 597. In 1649 the interest rates were again lowered to six percent. For usury see below, pp. 247-9, 256.



The crown again aware of the profitable nature of money-lending, delayed the reduction for three years and collected the difference in the interim.<sup>9</sup> These attempts made to control and tax the profits made on lent-money hinder somewhat an examination of the money-lending interests of Edinburgh's elite. The personal nature of bonds made it easy for them to disguise the amount of profit, and a rate of interest is not always stated on a bond. However, it would indeed be surprising if the profits collected on lent-money did not, in most cases, exceed the legally required limits.

Edinburgh's merchant elite were the leaders in the early years of the seventeenth century in developing a system of money-lending and credit within the country. By 1638 a complicated system of borrowing - requiring both sureties and co-guarantors, allowing for transferable and heritable bonds - had been developed and were part of the day-to-day business practices of the elite. Not only were the nation's wealthiest merchants involved in money-lending in return for annual payments out of property, both urban and rural,<sup>10</sup> but they also realized a substantial part of their income from the direct return of coin for money lent. It is this strictly cash profit which is to be considered here - the idea of loans made simply for the return of profits in money. Of the 310 merchants considered to be the richest in the burgh during these years evidence survives of 162, or fifty-two percent, having been involved in business transactions which could be considered as showing a concern to lend or, indeed, borrow money with the idea

---

9. APS, v, 13, 39.

10. For a discussion of wadsetting and the elite's interest in rural property see chapter seven.

of either receiving or paying profits directly in cash. These were also the merchants who had the entrepreneurial skills needed to provide most of the credit facilities available within Scotland between 1600 and 1638.

The problem in examining the structure of money-lending during this period lies in the very nature of the evidence. The surviving burgh court records which mention the practice of money-lending usually record only bad debts - merchants suing for repayment of money lent by them - and there is a danger of creating the impression that money-lending was an extremely hazardous and risky endeavour.<sup>11</sup> Very little evidence survives of satisfactorily completed transactions, although the private business papers do, to a limited extent, indicate these sorts of deals, balancing out the court records somewhat. The major problem, however, lies in the very structure of the legal wording of the bonds or obligations. A typical bond merely stated the parties involved, and their guarantors if any; the sum owed as 'liquidate expense' or 'penalty' in case of failure to meet the stated requirements. Prior to 1621 there is a mention of an annual rent or of an interest rate charged on the principal sum in only seven bonds.<sup>12</sup> Interest was without a doubt charged on bonds before 1621. The absence of a mention of a fixed rate of interest may have been merely a reflection

---

11. SR0, B22/8/9-30.

12. These are: William Cochrane charged interest in 1608 and 1610, RPC, ix, 7-8; John Jackson paid annual rent in 1614, B22/8/14, 8 Feb. 1614; Thomas Lindsay charged ten percent p.a. in 1615, RPC, x, 384; John Murray charged ten percent p.a. in 1615, SR0, GD 157/613/2; James Inglis charged interest in 1616, SR0, GD 96/665; and James Arnot charged ten percent in 1620, RPC, xii, 369.

of English practices in which, due to the personal nature of the agreements, the original bond was made out for the principal sum plus interest with no need to then state separately the particular rate charged.<sup>13</sup> The taxation of 1621 of annual rents and the legal control of interest rates thereafter must have encouraged an alteration in the wording of bonds, for after 1621 there is a dramatic increase in the mention of rates; in most cases either stipulating the amount to be paid annually or merely declaring that it is to be charged at the accepted 'ordinary annual rate'. It is the idea of a 'liquidate expense', however, which tends to further muddy the already murky waters of money-lending practices. While most bonds tended to name a sum as required in penalty for non-payment of the original debt there would appear to be no single, fixed-rate at which the penalty was assessed. It could range from a charge of as much as sixty-five percent of the principal sum to as little as two and a half percent.<sup>14</sup> The rate decided upon must have been that judged as suitable between the parties involved and can in no way be viewed as an annual rent. While in some cases the penalty was only to be paid if the principal sum is still owed after a date stipulated for repayment in other cases it was a required part of the bond, due to be paid on the same date and together with the sum borrowed. When Patrick Wood borrowed 14,000 merks from Sir Alexander Leslie of Balgony in June 1638 he was required to repay it by November of that year or pay an additional 1,500 merks

---

13. Postan, Medieval Trade and Society, 30-1. It must be noted that this was a fourteenth-century practice.

14. SRO, B22/8/15, 14 June, 11 Oct. 1614.



as a penalty in case of failure, as well as the ordinary annual rent - at that time eight percent.<sup>15</sup> Yet, when Mr. John Sharp borrowed 100 marks from David Muirhead in May 1626 he was required to repay it by August of that year together with a liquidate expense of ten marks and the ordinary annual rent.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in 1616 Hugh Ross was required to repay a sum at Whitsun 1617 along with the interest payments and a liquidate expense.<sup>17</sup> From this it would appear that there were no standard procedures to be followed in assessing the amount described in the bonds as a 'liquidate expense'. The decision as to whether to charge a penalty or not was very much in the power of the person lending the money, who must have decided upon a basis of the known ability to repay, the credit-worthiness of the person involved, and, perhaps, the nature and size of the principal sum borrowed.

While it is almost impossible to determine the exact importance of income from money-lending to the annual income of any one member of the burgh elite it is possible to indicate its growing importance. Although a wealth of private business papers survive perhaps the best indicator of the elite's involvement in money-lending are the mentions made of it in testaments, both of the merchants and their spouses. Seventy-seven of the elite merchants' testaments registered between 1600 and 1650 make mention of sums either owed to or owed by the merchants at the time of their death in either borrowed money or as bonds of obligation. Added to these are

---

15. SRO, GD 26/4/74.

16. SRO, GD 30/1211/2.

17. SRO, GD 96/665.

similar references in the testaments of fifty-two spouses, which give also a glimpse into the merchant's business transactions; for the debts inscribed in a spouse's testament were usually described as being owed to both partners. Again it is the question of the nature of bonds of obligation which creates difficulties in analysing the elite's interest in money-lending. It is not always clear whether a sum registered in a testament as being owed by bond or by obligation was, in fact, due for lent money or for goods and services rendered. It would appear to have been a common practice, followed by merchants generally, to have presented bills for goods and merchandise promptly.<sup>18</sup> It also seems that the vast bulk of money lent by bond was not lent in exchange for goods since merchandise is seldom mentioned in the wording of such documents. It therefore seems likely that a bond was a purely fiscal arrangement which involved the payment of money in return for money. The recognition by the crown in 1621 of the amount of capital involved in money-lending which could be taxed, combined with the growing importance of this type of transaction as a source of income to a merchant may have caused an alteration in the method of registration of debts within a testament. Few testaments before that date make separate entries of money owed 'be compt' and 'be band'. Certainly in the 1630s and 1640s this separation is commonplace.

---

18. Certainly it was not unheard of for a merchant to allow bills for goods to amount up to a considerable sum, but these debts were generally, although not always, inscribed as being owed by 'compt' or account. For example see NLS, MSS 80.2.4, Sir Walter Dundas's accounts with Thomas Adinston, John Inglis, James Rae and John Rhind for wine and cloth between 1613 and 1631.

The growth of money-lending as an entrepreneurial activity indicates the existence of surplus capital which could be diverted into it. Certainly the sheer amount of money on loan during the period and the rather spectacular bankruptcies caused through borrowing money either by or from Edinburgh merchants bears this fact out.<sup>19</sup> The inventories of forty-seven of the 129 testaments of those members of the elite involved in money-lending activities register the existence in the merchant's hands of ready money - in gold or silver - at the time of death. The sum, when compared to the total value of the merchant's inventory of goods, ranges from as little as two percent to as much as 100 percent of the total inventory.<sup>20</sup> On average in the forty-seven testaments of the elite involved in money-lending mentioning ready money, forty-three percent of the worth of the entire inventory was held in ready money at the time of death. Considering that the inventory of goods was intended as a list of a merchant's total, easily realisable wealth - goods both on hand, and in transit, shares in ships, involvement in manufacturing and farming, as well as household and personal goods - it is somewhat surprising that, on average, almost half of this should have been kept in a liquid capital form. This was certainly a change from the inventories of Edinburgh's wealthiest men of the

---

19. See Patrick Wood in particular in appendix vii.

20. Edin. Tests, 10 Aug. 1613; 30 Jan 1633. Both George Cunningham and Alan Livingston died leaving ready money worth only two percent of their total inventory. David Alexander and George Smith left all of their inventories in ready money (Edin. Tests, 10 Jan. 1618; 29 Mar. 1632).



sixteenth century, who kept very little cash on hand, and were not involved prominently in money-lending.<sup>21</sup> Arguably the presence of ready money could merely indicate that mercantile business transactions were still conducted on a cash basis, or that the merchant involved was in the process of either paying or collecting debts at the time of death. However, the very existence of bonds for mercantile debts and the development of a credit structure based on paper with rudimentary banking facilities points to a lessening in importance of transactions of cash between merchants.<sup>22</sup> The sums in ready money involved are quite substantial in some cases. James Ainslie left almost £4,200 in cash equal to fifty-four percent of his inventory.<sup>23</sup> Thomas Bannatyne left some £3,300, or seventy-nine percent of his inventory in ready money.<sup>24</sup> Ninety-two percent of James Dalgleish's inventory, or over £15,000, was in cash,<sup>25</sup> James Forsyth died leaving £8,720 or forty percent of his realisable wealth in cash.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Bartilmo Somerville left £8,850 in cash, ninety-seven percent of his inventory,<sup>27</sup> and James Winram died leaving over £17,000 in ready money, equal to ninety-one percent of his

---

21. See testaments of William Birny and John McMorran, Edin. Tests, 9 Mar. 1568/9, 24 Nov. 1582; 23 July 1596.

22. See chapter four.

23. Edin. Tests, 29 Sept. 1623.

24. Edin. Tests, 28 Oct. 1635.

25. Edin. Tests, 22 July 1645.

26. Edin. Tests, 5 Apr. 1626.

27. Edin. Tests, 10 Feb. 1642.

inventory of goods.<sup>28</sup> The fact of the existence of such high proportions of ready money at the time of death, combined with the number of bonds of obligation or mentions of debts for borrowed money in the inventory of debts owed to the deceased perhaps indicates a growing importance and reliance upon money-lending on the part of the elite.

The inventory of debts owed to the deceased also provides a limited insight into the amount of a merchant's estate tied up in money-lending. It is possible by examining eighty-six of the testaments of those members of the elite involved in money-lending to make a rough estimate of the importance of bonds of obligation and direct money-lending to the elite. The eighty-six testaments, dating from 1609 to 1650, make particular mention in the inventory of debts owed to the merchant of sums owed for bonds or by obligation, for annual rents on principal sums of money or that owed directly to the deceased as lent or borrowed money. Again due to the nature of a bond it is not always possible to determine whether a sum owed by bond was for lent-money or goods but for this purpose all mentions of money owed for merchandise has been ignored. A comparison of the amount owed in bonds, annual rents or lent-money with the total of the debts owed shows that these forms of business transactions were of some considerable importance to the burgh elite. Between 1609 and 1650 at least forty-seven percent of all of the debts owed to elite members registered in testaments were owed in this fashion, and if

---

28. Edin. Tests, 11 Aug. 1632. These figures, when converted into sterling, place these Edinburgh merchants as far wealthier than the merchants of seventeenth-century Ipswich (Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth-century Ipswich', 116).

testaments registered after 1639 are ignored the figure rises to over fifty percent. Certainly the percentage of money owed to Edinburgh merchants involved in money-lending in the testaments of the late sixteenth century in no way approaches the significance of this figure.<sup>29</sup> The amount owed in bonds or lent money could be as little as the £97 owed in interest to Alan Livingston in 1632, equalling little more than one percent of all debts owed to him;<sup>30</sup> or the bond for £440 owed to Isabelle Wilkie, spouse of James Troup, in 1637 which again amounted to less than one percent of the debts owed to her.<sup>31</sup> At the other end of the scale all of the debts owed to Patrick Ellis in 1620, totalling over £12,000 were owed by bonds of obligation;<sup>32</sup> all of the debts owed to William Justice in 1618 were owed by bonds, although these came to little more than £540;<sup>33</sup> all of the £4,600 owed to Thomas Bannatyne in 1635 was in the form of bonds;<sup>34</sup> Helen Scarlett was owed £7,840 in 1632 in bonds, all of the money due to her;<sup>35</sup> and all of the £666 owed to John Carstair's wife, Anna Rae, was owed directly as borrowed money.<sup>36</sup> However amongst the more usual amounts owed in bonds or borrowed money were Agnes Graham, spouse of Mr. Nicol Brown, who in 1612 was owed £1,833 in bonds out of a total of £3,406 owed to her.<sup>37</sup> Alexander Pearson was owed £500 in borrowed money

---

29. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 187-8.

30. Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1633.

31. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Wilkie, 20 Apr. 1637.

32. Edin. Tests, 12 Dec. 1620.

33. Edin. Tests, 30 Jan. 1619.

34. Edin. Tests, 11 July 1635.

35. Edin. Tests, 16 June 1632.

36. Edin. Tests, Anna Rae, 4 Sept. 1634.

37. Edin. Tests, Agnes Graham, 21 Apr. 1612.



and interest in 1625, which amounted to forty-eight percent of all debts owed to him.<sup>38</sup> James Cochrane's wife was owed forty-seven percent of all the debts registered to her in annual rents and bonds, some £1,020 out of £2,130 when she died in 1627.<sup>39</sup> In 1633 George Stirling's wife was owed £1,333 in bonds out of a total of £2,000<sup>40</sup> and in 1640 forty-three percent of the debts owed to John Roxburgh were owed by bonds of obligation.<sup>41</sup>

By comparing the amount of ready money which a merchant had at the time of his death and the amount of money registered as owed to him either by bond or as lent money it is possible to indicate a connection between having surplus cash on hand and an active interest in money-lending. James Ainslie died in 1623, leaving over £4,000 in ready money, equal to fifty-four percent of his inventory, and he was owed just over £2,000 directly by bonds, a total of eighty-six percent of all debts owed to him.<sup>42</sup> In 1616 all of David Alexander's inventory was in the form of ready money, and ninety-six percent of all debts owed to him were by bonds of obligation.<sup>43</sup> Sixty percent of the value of Robert Dougal's inventory was in cash upon his death in 1622, and almost all of the debts owed to him were registered as bonds of obligation.<sup>44</sup> James Forsyth left some forty percent of his inventory's value in surplus cash in 1625, and thirty-six

---

38. Edin. Tests, 21 June 1625.

39. Edin. Tests, Bessie Alexander, 16 Oct. 1627.

40. Edin. Tests, Margaret Haddam, 26 Mar. 1633.

41. Edin. Tests, 23 Nov. 1640.

42. Edin. Tests, 29 Sept. 1623.

43. Edin. Tests, 10 Jan. 1618.

44. Edin. Tests, 29 Mar. 1623. £125 out of £10,484 was owed to him for house rents.

percent of the debts owed to him by bond.<sup>45</sup> His interest in money-lending was of a long term nature, for in 1609 his wife had left sixty-four percent of their inventory in cash and seventy-six percent of all debts owed to her were registered as being by bonds of obligation.<sup>46</sup> In 1624 William Mauld's widow left thirty-nine percent of her inventory in ready money, and eighty-three percent of the debts owed to her directly in lent money.<sup>47</sup> James Winram in 1632 left ninety-one percent of his inventory in ready money, and thirty-one percent of the debts owed to him were for bonds and the interest payments upon them.<sup>48</sup> In 1638 Marion Telfer died leaving forty-three percent of her inventory's worth in ready money and thirty-four percent of all the debts owed to her in lent money.<sup>49</sup> Two years later her husband, Mr. Bartilmo Somerville, died leaving ninety-seven percent of the value of his inventory, some £8,800, in ready money, as well as having almost thirty percent of all money owed to him, £4,573 out of £15,651, as due from annual rents and lent money.<sup>50</sup> There were, however, exceptions. Margaret Barclay, James Loch's wife, left fifteen percent of her inventory valued in ready money but only four percent of the debts owed to her were for her money-lending activities.<sup>51</sup> James Pringle, who died in 1621, left £600 in ready money, equal to seventy-five percent of the value of his inventory of goods, but he was owed only £998 in bonds and expenses on them out of a total of £5,426 owed to him.<sup>52</sup> In 1635 Jean Swinton, widow of James Winram a noted

---

45. Edin. Tests, 5 Apr. 1626.

46. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Rhind, 30 Nov. 1610.

47. Edin. Tests, Bathia Guthrie, 1 Sept. 1627.

48. Edin. Tests, 11 Aug. 1632.

49. Edin. Tests, Marion Telfer, 17 Dec. 1638.

50. Edin. Tests, 10 Feb, 22 Nov. 1642.

51. Edin. Tests, Margaret Barclay, 5 Dec. 1634.

52. Edin. Tests, 29 Mar. 1632.

money-lender, had less than one percent of the total value of her goods in ready money but was owed thirteen percent of all the debts outstanding at the time of her death in bonds of obligation.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, it would appear that a merchant who was accustomed to having spare cash was likely to speculate with this surplus capital in the field of money lending.

Testamentary evidence also provides some idea of the profits made on both bonds of obligation and by money-lending. Again, due to the nature of both bonds and of the testaments themselves, there is not a mention in all cases of the rate of interest charged on the principal sum owed. The interest may either be subsumed within the stated principal or may have been collected prior to the time of death. In all cases the annual rents were stated as due at set times of the year, either at Whitsun or Martinmas or were divided as being owed on both of the above terms. In some cases the annual rent due on a principal sum was entered without making mention of the amount of the original loan. However, of the 129 testaments of those merchants and their spouses involved in money-lending which mention debts owed at the time of death, forty state directly a rate of interest charged and a further four mention a sum owed as an annual rent without mentioning the principal sum. While it may appear surprising that so few testaments mention interest rates charged on outstanding debts this may be nothing more than an indication that annual rents were collected both separately from the principal sum owed and with some diligence. What is surprising is the fact that the majority of the interest rates

---

53. Edin. Tests, Jean Swinton, 13 Nov. 1635.



charged were well within the legally required limits of the acts of parliament of ten percent before 1633 and eight percent per annum thereafter. Very few of the wealthiest men of the burgh can be shown to have charged excessively high annual interest on money which they loaned.

The earliest mention in testaments of an interest rate charged by a member of the elite is the testament of Patrick Cochrane in 1613.<sup>54</sup> Although the greater part of the £16,000 in debts owed to him was owed for merchandise rather than for lent money he did lend out almost £120 either by bond or directly as lent money. No interest rates were included on any of these sums. However, a further £20 was owed to him by the Bishop of Glasgow as one term's interest on £400 principal, equalling ten percent per annum. Similarly, he was owed interest calculated at ten percent a year for a debt of £200 principal and a further eight and a half percent interest a year on another sum of 200 merks owed to him by two other creditors. Obviously, money lending for Cochrane was not regarded as a major money-making enterprise, although he expected a reasonable return on whatever money he invested in it. At the time of his death in 1622 Robert Dougal charged ten percent interest a year on all of the outstanding bonds of obligation owed to him.<sup>55</sup> This amounted to over £1,000 a year of extra income. Henry Morison charged somewhere between nine and ten percent on the bonds owed to him in 1623, although the majority of the £30,000 owed to him was owed for merchandise rather than as a result of

---

54. Edin. Tests, 29 Dec. 1613.

55. Edin. Tests, 29 Mar. 1623.

moneylending.<sup>56</sup> In 1624, Bathia Guthrie, widow of William Mauld, charged between five and ten percent interest a year on the bonds owed to her, earning at least £733 in interest out of a total of £758 owed to her.<sup>57</sup> Alexander Pierson charged only five percent a year on the bonds owed to him which amounted to forty-eight percent of all debts owed to him.<sup>58</sup> James Inglis charged ten percent interest a year on two of the bonds owed to him in 1625;<sup>59</sup> and in 1627 Bessie Alexander, wife of James Cochrane, received ten percent annual interest on a bond owed to her since Whitsun 1621.<sup>60</sup> The elite, while involved with interest charges in the early years of the seventeenth century did not charge excessive interest on bonds, at no time more than ten percent a year, and were still more interested in profits from merchandising than in profits made through moneylending.

Of the eleven testaments of elite members mentioning interest rates between 1630 and 1640 only three mention annual interest rates charges in excess of ten percent prior to 1633 and in excess of eight percent thereafter. Janet McMath and her husband, John Trotter, charged an interest rate of ten percent a year on a sum of 40,000 merks lent to Sir Patrick Home in 1629-30.<sup>61</sup> Fourteen percent of all debts owed to them were owed by bonds of obligation. James Halyburton charged ten percent a year interest on the bonds and money borrowed from him at the time of his death in August 1631.<sup>62</sup> Almost ninety percent of the £1,777 owed to him was:

---

56. Edin. Tests, 12 Feb. 1624. Neither of his wives' testaments record any interest in money-lending. See Edin. Tests, Christian Dick, 30 Mar. 1619 and Janet Spottiswood, 22 July 1624.

57. Edin. Tests, Bathia Guthrie, 1 Sept. 1627. Almost forty percent of her inventory of goods was cash.

58. Edin. Tests, 21 June 1625. He was owed £500 in interest out of a total of £1,038.

59. Edin. Tests, 21 Dec. 1625.

60. Edin. Tests, Bessie Alexander, 16 Oct. 1627.

61. Edin. Tests, Janet McMath, 18 Mar. 1631.

62. Edin. Tests, 11 Aug. 1632.

either by bond or for the annual rents upon them. Although almost all of the £7,840 owed to Helen Scarlett was for bonds, only one bond mentions an interest rate, that being five percent a year charged on a bond of 200 marks although this may have only been due for one term.<sup>63</sup> James Winram charged ten percent a year interest on the sums of money owed to him in 1632 which equalled thirty-one percent of all debts owed to him.<sup>64</sup> Three years later, thirteen percent of the debts owed to his widow were by bonds of obligation, although no interest rates were stated.<sup>65</sup> Andrew Hill charged ten percent interest a year for borrowed money in June 1636, two percent above the parliamentary limit.<sup>66</sup> Thirteen percent of the £4,733 owed to John Winram in 1637 was due for interest charges of between three and four percent, well within the legally required eight percent per annum; and sixty-five percent of the amount owed to him was owed by bonds of obligation rather than for merchandise.<sup>67</sup> Andrew Oswald's wife charged only eight or nine percent a year on money lent by her and her husband in 1639.<sup>68</sup> They collected £917 a year in interest charges on his bonds and collected £149 a year, forty-three percent of all money owed to him.<sup>69</sup> Patrick Wood and James Dalgleish are also registered as charging interest above the legal limit. While, at the time of his death in December 1638, Wood did have various sums loaned by him at registered interest rates of either four percent or eight percent a year, he was also owed by John and

---

63. Edin. Tests, 16 June 1632.

64. Edin. Tests, 11 Aug. 1632.

65. Edin. Tests, Jean Swinton, 13 Nov. 1635.

66. Edin. Tests, 11 Aug. 1636. All debts owed to him were by bonds of obligation.

67. Edin. Tests, 15 Dec. 1637.

68. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Denholm, 17 Oct. 1639.

69. Edin. Tests, 23 Nov. 1640.



Archibald Coupar, Edinburgh merchants, a debt of £2,000 with £560 annual rent, an interest charge of some twenty-eight percent a year. He was further owed a bond from September 1636 for £175 with £34 annual interest, a rate of nineteen percent a year, as well as also being owed a further charge of £80 for expenses.<sup>70</sup> Similarly James Dalgleish's wife charged the legally required interest rate on many of the bonds and money lent by them up to the time of her death in 1639.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in her testament a bond for £800 had ten percent interest charged annually on it from Whitsun 1621 to Whitsun 1636 when the interest rate was actually lowered to eight percent annually. Dalgleish, and his wife, were obviously interested in maximising profits from bonds and borrowed money as eighty percent of the £14,698 owed to them was due for annual profits on principal sums. While keeping to the required interest rates in the main, they charged over eight percent annual interest in thirteen cases, ranging from sixteen percent a year to as much as the forty-five percent a year interest charged on a principal of 800 merks and the seventy-seven percent a year profit made on a principal sum of 845 merks owed by David Dundas of Philpstoun.<sup>72</sup> The 1630s saw an increase in interest being charged by the elite for their lending of money for profitable returns although few of them charged excessive rates. Yet by the late 1630s as much as eighty percent of all debts owed to a merchant could be owed for bonds and lent money, with interest charged at as high a rate as seventy percent a year. This trend continued in the 1640s and 1650s.

---

70. Edin. Tests, 22 July 1642, 29 Apr. 1643, 8 Dec. 1655.

71. Edin. Tests, Euphame Nasmith, 6 Aug. 1639.

72. Ibid.

Sixteen testaments of the elite involved in money-lending registered in the 1640s mention interest rates charged, and a further four mentioning it were registered in the 1650s. Again it would appear to have been normal practice to charge interest rates within the legal limits of eight percent per annum until 1649 and thereafter six percent a year, although exceptions do exist. Money collected as annual rents became of ever increasing importance in the total of overall debts owed to the deceased during these two decades. Upon her death in 1640 twenty-seven percent of all debts owed to Janet Napier, wife of Patrick Hepburn, were owed as annual rents on money - although neither the principal sums nor the rates of interest were registered - rather than for merchandise.<sup>73</sup> In 1641 John Trotter charged a mere four percent a year on a loan of 12,000 merks, although this equalled thirty-nine percent of all money owed to him.<sup>74</sup> This shows certainly an increase in his dealings in money-lending, for only fourteen percent of the debts owed to him when his wife died in 1630 were owed for interest payments.<sup>75</sup> John Morison charged eight percent on the bonds owed to him, which totalled ten percent of all money owed to him.<sup>76</sup> Mr. James Scott in 1642 charged between two percent and eight percent interest a year on both bonds and lent money, which equalled twenty-six percent of the £18,263 owed to him.<sup>77</sup> Ninety-seven percent of the sums owed to David Alexander's widow in 1642 were owed as bonds and as interest payments for borrowed money.<sup>78</sup> She regularly charged between four percent and eight

---

73. Edin. Tests, Janet Napier, 26 July 1644.

74. Edin. Tests, 8 Mar. 1642. Trotter charged his son four percent interest per annum.

75. Edin. Tests, Janet McMath, 18 Mar. 1631.

76. Edin. Tests, 19 Dec. 1642.

77. Edin. Tests, 27 Feb. 1643.

78. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Allan, 11 July 1642.

percent on the money she lent, although she did charge the earls of Rothes, Lothian, Dalhousie, and Lords Lyndsay and Balmerino twenty percent interest annually on a joint debt of 10,000 merks. Approximately ten percent of the £11,364 owed to Stephen Boyd in 1642 was for lent money some of which had been lent from at least 1623, upon which principal sums he usually charged eight percent interest a year.<sup>79</sup> James Troup charged eight percent interest a year on two bonds and nine percent on another bond, which equalled ninety percent of all debts owed to him in 1643.<sup>80</sup> Archibald Campbell, Ronald Murray and George Arnot all charged only between four percent and eight percent annual interest on the principal sums owed to them in 1645 and 1646.<sup>81</sup> Campbell was owed twenty percent of all money due to him in interest charges; Murray thirty-five percent and Arnot forty-nine percent. Only Gilbert Fraser, William Dick, younger, and Robert Acheson charged what could be termed excessive interest in this period. Fraser charged twelve percent interest on two bonds, eleven percent on another and thirty-one percent on a bond owed to him by the Committee of Estates in 1646.<sup>82</sup> At least forty-two percent of all debts owed to him were owed for interest charges and by bonds. Dick charged twelve percent on a bond owed to him by his father, William Dick of Braid,<sup>83</sup> and Acheson charged twelve percent on a bond owed to him by the Committee of Estates.<sup>84</sup> These rates,

---

79. Edin. Tests, 29 Jan. 1645. He did charge nine percent on a sum lent to Gilbert Oustian, tailor.

80. Edin. Tests, 12 Sept. 1643. Twenty percent of the value of his inventory was in ready money.

81. Edin. Tests, 26 Feb. 1647; 2 July 1649; 18 May 1646.

82. Edin. Tests, 13 July 1646.

83. Edin. Tests, 1 June 1648.

84. Edin. Tests, 19 Jan. 1650.



however, perhaps reflect an awareness of the difficulties in collecting the principal from these parties due to the general political situation of the time rather than an interest in excessive profit. The testamentary evidence for the 1640s and early part of the 1650s again reflects the idea that money collected from interest on lent money was becoming increasingly important to the elite. Few merchants charged excessive rates of interest and it was not unusual for at least twenty to thirty percent of all outstanding debts at the time of death to be owed for this reason rather than for profits from merchandising.

The evidence provided by sources other than testaments reinforces the idea that money lending was regarded by the burgh elite as both a profitable and a growing part of their money-making endeavours. Between 1600 and 1640 sixty-three of the wealthiest members of the burgh brought a total of 103 actions for repayment of debts, liquidate expenses and in some cases interest owed to them before the privy council. Again, it is difficult to determine whether these debts are owed for goods and merchandise or directly for lent money as usually the source of the debts are not stated. In most cases no interest rates charged are mentioned; there being mentioned only a sum owed as liquidate expenses. However, the few mentions of interest levied do conform to the idea that excessive interest was rarely charged. In 1608, Mr. Alexander Ellis brought action before the privy council for the repayment of a debt of 400 marks, £20 expenses and the 'byrun annuals', although what they were was not stated.<sup>85</sup> In 1615, Thomas Lyndsay sued for non-payment of £1,322, £120 in expenses and an annual interest calculated at ten percent.<sup>86</sup>

---

85. RPC, viii, 161.

86. Ibid., x, 384.

Two years later he again brought a case before the privy council and sued for a debt of £176, with £40 expenses and an unstated annual interest.<sup>87</sup> In 1617 Robert Acheson brought an action against Archibald Home, chamberlain to Lady Anna Home, Lady Broxmouth for non-payment of £938 with £100 expenses and ten percent interest per annum.<sup>88</sup> Less than a year later he again sued Archibald Home, this time styled of 'Ligertwood', for non-payment of a principal sum of £1,113 and £200 expenses, although with no mention of any interest.<sup>89</sup> Upon the death of Acheson's wife in July 1619 a debt of £1,000 is recorded as owing to her by Archibald Home of 'Lichtwood'.<sup>90</sup> Also recorded there is a debt owed by the laird of Coldenknowes for £420 owed by bond with no mention of an interest rate charged. However, in May 1620 Acheson sued Sir John Home of Coldenknowes for non-payment of £420 principal, £40 expenses and ten percent interest annually on the sum.<sup>91</sup> In November of the same year James Arnot was himself prosecuted for non-payment of a debt of 6,000 merks together with 600 merks expenses and 600 merks interest.<sup>92</sup> James McMorranne was owed ten percent interest in 1620 on a debt of 1000 merks.<sup>93</sup> In 1632 a complaint was brought before the privy council against James Dalgleish in that a debtor he had caused to be imprisoned had indeed lawfully discharged her required interest of forty merks a year on a debt of 400 merks.<sup>94</sup>

---

87. Ibid., xi, 221-2.

88. Ibid., xi, 275.

89. Ibid., xi, 427-8.

90. Edin. Tests, Margaret Flebairn, 28 Aug. 1619.

91. RPC, xii, 265.

92. Ibid., xii, 369. By 1624 Arnot was bankrupt and living on charity. See ibid., xiii, 539-40.

93. Ibid., xii, 348.

94. Ibid., iv, 1630-32, 415-6.

In 1637 John Davidson complained that he had been put in prison unlawfully for debts contracted in his youth. Henry Nisbet figures as one of those responsible for his arrest and was owed £100, plus the interest, although the rate is not stated.<sup>95</sup> William Cochrane in 1610 charged what would appear to be an excessive rate of interest on lent money amounting to '... the annuel or failye, as he termes it, quhilk he amonteth to twenty or thairby of the hundreth for ane quarter of ane yeir...' which would equal some eighty percent annually. The surprising thing is that the complaint against this debt was brought not for reasons of usury but because Cochrane pursued his cause before a foreign court in Berwick, which was illegal under Scots law.<sup>96</sup> Certainly Cochrane was never charged before the privy council for usury although five members of the elite were. In July 1612 a complaint was made against Alexander Vaus that contrary to the acts of parliament he had taken more than ten percent interest for lent money.<sup>97</sup> In 1624 four members of the elite, William Dick, Gilbert Kirkwood, John Sinclair and James Murray were all warned to prepare to answer before the privy council on charges of taking extraordinary profit for money-lending.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the problem may have been more widespread among the wealthy merchants of Scotland for a proposition from the King a year later suggested that when merchants made their fortune they should be required to keep to their trade as merchants and not turn to usury.<sup>99</sup> However, these injunctions did not dissuade Dick, Sinclair and Murray together from their money-lending

---

95. Ibid., vi, 1635-37, 523.

96. Ibid., ix, 7-8.

97. Ibid., ix, 401-2.

98. Ibid., xiii, 438.

99. Ibid., i, 1625-27, 157.



projects for in August 1629 these same three merchants, amongst others, complained to the privy council that William, Lord Berridale owed them certain great sums of money which they required him to repay.<sup>100</sup>

While these elite members were the only ones cautioned for charging usurious rates of interest during the first forty years of the seventeenth century their private papers and registered bonds reveal that while unusual it was not unknown to charge a substantial rate of interest particularly if the principal was not repaid at the stipulated time. In May 1604 John Dougal, as cautioner to his brother's debt of £20 plus £10 expenses incurred in September 1602, was bound to repay £41 by Whitsun 1604 together with £10 expenses, a fifty percent increase.<sup>101</sup> If, until annual rates were regularly stated in bonds in the 1620s, the liquidate expense was indeed assessed as a proportion of the original loan then certainly it could amount to as much as sixty-five percent of the principal sum lent.<sup>102</sup> However, for the most part, even the liquidate expense charged was a reasonable percentage of the original loan, six percent in 1592, eight percent in 1606, ten percent in 1611 and 1613, five percent in 1613 and three percent in 1614.<sup>103</sup> It would appear that usually the elite, when involved in money-lending, charged a reasonable rate of interest, perhaps to encourage this part of their entrepreneurial activities. Typical of the money-lending

---

100. Ibid., iii, 1629-30, 268.

101. SRO, S22/8/9, 1 May 1604.

102. SRO, B22/8/14, 3 Feb. 1614; B22/8/15, 11 Oct. 1614; SRO, GD 6/499/1; GD 97/1/298; GD 109/1389 in which the liquidate expenses charged on bonds ran from twenty-five to sixty-five percent of the principal sum loaned.

103. SRO, B22/8/9, 4 Mar. 1606; B22/8/15, 14 June 1614; SRO, CS7/276, 19 Jan. 1613.

transactions prior to 1620 was the contract of 21 November 1615 between Simon Scott of Bonnington and John Murray in which Scott borrowed 2,220 merks, due for repayment at Martinmas 1616, with £200 expenses in case of failure and an annual interest rate calculated at ten percent. However, a penalty clause included in the document states that a further £20 was to be assessed for each term's non-payment of this interest charge.<sup>104</sup> In assessing the penalties charged for non-payment of the principal sum loaned in the early years of the seventeenth century there may have been a connection with what could be termed as the 'mercantile year' ending in November with the wine trade and harvest. Bonds due before that time may have been viewed more favourably than those which might be owed beyond it. Merchants were perhaps unhappy with long term debts.

The surviving evidence of money-lending after 1620 tends to support the view that the interest collected was within the legally required limits. The taxation of 1621 of profits on money lent from 1619 seems to have required that interest rates charged were stated in the bonds for in almost all cases of surviving contracts after 1621 a rate of interest is actually stated. In August 1620 Gilbert Kirkwood was assigned a bond in which James, Lord Stewart of Ochiltree had borrowed 2,000 merks on which was charged the ordinary annual rent - the ten percent per annum.<sup>105</sup> In 1620 and 1621 William Dick lent money on which he charged ten percent yearly interest.<sup>106</sup> In 1629 he lent a further 1,600 merks at ten percent interest per annum.<sup>107</sup> Between 1626 and 1630 Nicol

---

104. SRO, GD 157/613/2.

105. SRO, GD 41/5/1,2.

106. SRO, GD 109/1411/1, 2.

107. NLS, Charters, 5677.

Edgar collected £100 annually on a loan of £1,000 he had made to the earl of Buccleuch.<sup>108</sup> Alexander Monteath charged ten percent annual interest in 1625 on the 7,000 marks he had lent to Sir Walter Dundas.<sup>109</sup> Stephen Boyd charged interest of ten percent annually on the £319 13/- which he lent to Mr. John Skene, as well as assessing a liquidate expense of £14 on the principal sum.<sup>110</sup> When John, Lord Hay of Yester borrowed £1,000 from John Hamilton in July 1627 he was obliged to repay the principal by Martinmas 1627 together with £45 as annual rent and profit, a rate of only nine percent annually. However, he was to be further charged a penalty of £100 in case of failure to repay, and the interest charges were to be stepped up to ten percent annually. Hamilton obviously profited from this for the debt was not repaid until Martinmas of 1628.<sup>111</sup>

The interest charged by the elite during the 1630s reflects their concern for maintaining a legal rate of interest, for they responded to the act of parliament lowering the interest rate. Helen Scarlett charged only ten percent annual interest on the 500 marks she lent to William Somerville, although a sum of £50 was included as owed as liquidate expenses.<sup>112</sup> Both Thomas Deans and John Smith charged ten percent per annum on money which they lent in 1632.<sup>113</sup> From July 1631 to March 1636 Peter Somerville received £100

---

108. SRO, GD 224/393/14/1-11.

109. NLS, Adv. Lib. Charters B.558.

110. SRO, B22/8/26, 4 Dec. 1629.

111. SRO, GD 28/1320.

112. SRO, GD 34/469. The debt was repaid in 1633.

113. NLS, Charter 5265; MSS, 5412 nos. 8, 9 for Deans. SRO, GD 30/1268 for Smith. Smith charged ten percent interest in 1634 (GD 30/1274).



per term from Mr. John Sharp of Houston, as the interest owed to him on a loan of 3,000 merks, a rate of ten percent annually. However, starting in January 1637 Somerville lowered the interest rate, as he was legally required to do, to eight percent and thereafter collected only £80 per term on the principal.<sup>114</sup> Similarly the interest payments made by Sharp to George Baillie from 1635 to 1637 were calculated at ten percent per annum while the first payment in 1638 was calculated at eight percent annually.<sup>115</sup> In 1634 Mr. John Cant lent the earl of Mar money at ten percent interest annually; as did both John Hamilton and Thomas Charters.<sup>116</sup> Robert Acheson received ten percent annually on the 1,000 merks he lent to Sir Alexander Nisbet in November 1635, and the debt was not repaid until June 1639, although it is not clear if the interest rate was lowered by two percent after 1637.<sup>117</sup> George McMorran received ten percent per annum between 1631 and 1634 on the 5,000 merks he lent to Andrew Ker of 'Fawdounsyde'.<sup>118</sup> John Winram charged nine percent, ten percent and eight percent a year on loans to Andrew Ker from 1631 to 1633, Sir Walter Riddell in February 1636 and Riddell again in June 1636 respectively.<sup>119</sup> By 1638 it was unusual

---

114. SRO, GD 30/1258/1-9.

115. SRO, GD 30/1284/1-9.

116. SRO, GD 124/17/6/4, 20, 21.

117. NLS Charter 4822.

118. NLS Charter 5276.

119. NLS, Charter 5267, 5299, 5302.

for an elite merchant to charge above eight percent interest a year. David McCall was owed eight percent annual interest from Whitsun 1637 on 1000 merks lent to Sir Alexander Nisbet which debt was still owed in 1639.<sup>120</sup> Peter Blackburn charged eight percent interest on the 4,000 merks borrowed from him by Edinburgh town council in 1637.<sup>121</sup> In 1638 Patrick Wood borrowed 14,000 merks at eight percent annual interest.<sup>122</sup> John Inglis charged eight percent a year from June 1638 to November 1639 on the 5,000 merks he had lent to Sir Walter Riddell.<sup>123</sup>

The importance to a merchant's income of money owed as interest on lent money is revealed in several cases. Between June and October 1637 Mr. Nicol Udard lent £658 in short term loans of usually no more than one term to nine Edinburgh people. These debts are recorded in the Burgh Registers of Deeds as unpaid at the appropriate due time, for which Udard was owed a further £182 in liquidate expenses, as well as the ordinary annual rent, at that time eight percent per annum.<sup>124</sup> In five months Udard made a net profit of some twenty-eight percent as well as the outstanding interest charges, and although it must be admitted that these were unrealised profits for which he had to sue in the burgh court nevertheless the profits were not insubstantial. Perhaps the best evidence of the important role played by money-lending in the economic portfolio of any elite member, however, is revealed by the relations between Alexander and Robert Monteath,

---

120. NLS, Charters 4836, 4873.

121. SRO, GD 6/1013.

122. SRO, GD 26/4/74.

123. NLS, MSS 5412, ff. 119, 127, 138, 151.

124. SRO, B22/8/29, 26 July, 20 Nov., 22 Nov. 1637.

father and son, and Sir Walter Dundas. Alexander Monteath had lent Dundas 7,000 merks in June 1625 for which he was due, and did indeed receive, 700 merks interest yearly up to November 1626 whereafter Monteath transferred the bond to his son Robert.<sup>125</sup> Robert Monteath duly collected the 700 merks interest until 1630.<sup>126</sup> By this time the Monteaths had made a profit of 3,500 merks on the original loan whereupon Dundas wrote to Monteath, to his obvious consternation, suggesting repaying the loan in total, in two payments along with the interest due in November 1630, and Whitsun 1631. This suggestion prompted Monteath to write to Dundas on 1 November 1630 urging Dundas to keep the whole sum outstanding. He wrote '... doe me that favour to place me amongst the last of those quhome with you hath adoe in this kinde... lette me so continue I humbly beseache yow, and in this be pleased to benifit...'.<sup>127</sup> The following day Monteath wrote again to Dundas pleading with him not to send in the money, offering him whatever terms Dundas required to continue the debt, and admitting that if the sum was to be repaid he [Monteath] stood to make a substantial loss.<sup>128</sup> However, Dundas refused these offers and Monteath was obliged to accept the repayment of half of the principal on 3 November, 1630.<sup>129</sup> This is the only surviving letter of its kind directly indicating the importance of money-lending to the elite. It seems to be confirmed, however, by another letter of September 1636 from John Rhind to the earl of

---

125. NLS, Adv. Lib, Charters B. 558, and for discharges see NLS 80.2.3 ff 67, 71, 73.

126. NLS 80.2.3 ff 76, 77, 82, 84, 88, 90.

127. NLS, Adv. Lib, 80.1.1 f 166.

128. NLS, Adv. Lib, 80.1.1 f 169.

129. NLS Adv. Lib, 80.2.3 f '94.



Morton assuring the earl that he should not be pressed for sudden repayment of the principal sum.<sup>130</sup> These letters surely indicate both the profitable returns which could be made for an outlay of surplus cash on the part of the merchant and the importance which the merchants placed on these dealings to their annual income.

Not only were the elite concerned with lending money for profitable returns but themselves took advantage of this extra capital in order to finance their own commercial transactions. By using the testaments of wives who died while their husbands were actively trading it is possible to reveal a merchant's normal activities rather than those at the end of their career as revealed in his own testament. The elite were not loathe to finance their own commercial transactions by borrowing money perhaps due to short term cash difficulties. The testaments of twenty-six wives mention sums owed by them or their husbands for borrowed money and bonds. In 1607 nine percent of the £22,000 owed by Janet Morison, wife of Thomas Inglis, was owed as money borrowed from her nephews. Upon his death thirty years later none of Inglis's debts were owed as borrowed money.<sup>131</sup> The testaments of Marion Cramond in 1609 and Isabelle Wilkie in 1632, both married to Andrew Purves, reveal that twenty-five percent of the money owed by Cramond was directly for borrowed money, while Wilkie owed 300 merks as borrowed money and a bond for 4,000 merks, seventy-eight percent of all monies owed by her, money borrowed perhaps, to finance their husband's business

---

130. NLS, MS 84 no. 56.

131. Edin. Tests, Janet Morison, 14 Feb. 1609; 27 Oct. 1637.

ventures.<sup>132</sup> Helen Gourlay, John Rae's wife, owed twenty-four percent of all money owed by her in 1611 as borrowed money. Rae was not actively merchandising at the time of his death and he owed no borrowed money in 1624.<sup>133</sup> The testaments of Isabelle Davidson in 1620 and Margaret Edgar in 1628 reveal that twelve percent and ten percent respectively of all monies owed by them, and their husband James Rae, was due as borrowed money.<sup>134</sup> Rae was in both those years actively trading. In 1614, ninety-one percent of Helen Tod's debts were owed for borrowed money, and in 1625 all of Janet Johnston's debts were owed as money borrowed from her spouse's uncle. Both had been married to Gilbert Williamson, who owed no borrowed money at the time of his death in 1638.<sup>135</sup> In 1624, forty-eight percent of all money owed by William Nisbet's spouse was owed as borrowed money; George Suttie's spouse, in 1627, owed twenty-four percent of all debts as borrowed money and twenty-nine percent of the money owed by George Baillie's wife in 1628 was for money lent to her.<sup>136</sup> In 1631 Katherine Cullane, spouse of James Halyburton owed 4,200 merks in borrowed money as well as £300 in bond together with four years' interest calculated at ten percent a year.<sup>137</sup> In 1634, James Loch's spouse owed twenty-three percent of all their debts as money borrowed at five percent annual interest; John Rhind's wife owed twelve percent of their debts as borrowed money; Mr. Adam Pierson's wife owed ten percent of her debts as borrowed

---

132. Edin. Tests, Marion Cramond, 3 Jan 1610; Isabelle Wilkie, 30 Oct. 1632.

133. Edin. Tests, Helen Gourlay, 30 July 1611; 10 Aug. 1625.

134. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Davidson, 5 Nov. 1620; Margaret Edgar, 20 Apr. 1628.

135. Edin. Tests, Helen Tod, 6 Apr. 1616; Janet Johnston, 29 Sept. 1625; 9 Mar. 1639.

136. Edin. Tests, Janet Williamson, 28 Feb. 1624; Marion Blythe, 20 Feb. 1628; Christian Voirie, 24 Dec. 1628.

137. Edin. Tests, Katherine Cullane, 13 Apr. 1631.

money; and John Carstairs's wife owed all of her debts for borrowed money, a total of £666.<sup>138</sup> In 1637, seventy percent of the money owed by Isabelle Wilkie, spouse of James Troup, was due as bonds; while five years later her husband owed no debts by bond or as lent money.<sup>139</sup> It would appear to have been the case that during the time a merchant was actively trading it was possible that he relied heavily upon borrowing in order to finance his business ventures.

Certainly merchants themselves also borrowed money. In 1592 James Dalzell, with Walter Dundas, borrowed 1,000 merks from Henry Nisbet which was repaid in May 1595, although with no mention of profits from interest.<sup>140</sup> In June 1610 John Jackson borrowed £1,000 from Jane Howieson which he repaid, together with the annual interest in 1614.<sup>141</sup> However, at much the same time Jackson was himself lending considerable sums of money.<sup>142</sup> In 1613 Patrick Cochrane owed £433 which he had borrowed at a rate of almost seven percent annual interest.<sup>143</sup> In 1620 James Nasmith complained before the privy council that Ronald Murray had not paid some £6,500 owed to him, although this may have been a debt owed for merchandise, rather than as lent money.<sup>144</sup> Archibald Noble, at the time of his death in 1634, owed between four percent and seventeen percent annual interest on the £372 he owed as borrowed

---

138. Edin. Tests, Margaret Barclay, 5 Dec. 1634; Bessie Seton, 11 Feb. 1635; Isabelle Edgar, 1 Sept. 1634; Anna Rae, 4 Sept. 1634.

139. Edin. Tests, Isabelle Wilkie, 20 Apr. 1637; 12 Sept. 1643.

140. NLS, Adv. Lib. Charters B 332.

141. SRD, B22/8/14, 8 Feb. 1614.

142. SRD, GD 109/1397, 1399.

143. Edin. Tests, 29 Dec. 1613.

144. RPC, xii, 348.



money; which amounted to seventy-three percent of all his debts.<sup>145</sup> However, Patrick Wood perhaps of all the elite merchants epitomises the complicated patterns of investment in money lending shown by the burgh's wealthiest merchants during these years. While Wood's inventory of goods and debts owed to him upon his death in 1638 totalled some £190,000, including various sums of money lent by him at between eight percent and twenty-eight percent interest annually, he himself owed over £182,000 mostly in bonds, as borrowed money and in interest charges of between four percent and ten percent per annum.<sup>146</sup> Wood must have been playing a slightly risky game of borrowing money in order both to lend it at higher rates of interest and to finance his own considerable trading and manufacturing empire. He certainly complained bitterly in 1631 over the earl of Morton's non-payment of interest on a debt of 10,000 merks, and himself borrowed some 14,000 merks at eight percent interest per annum shortly before the time of his death in 1638.<sup>147</sup>

There can be little doubt that the wealthiest merchants of Edinburgh were regarded as the most natural group to be turned to for money-lending by not only other Edinburgh inhabitants but by

---

145. Edin. Tests, 6 Apr. 1639.

146. Edin. Tests, 22 Mar. 1639, 6 Mar, 26 May, 10 Sept, 30 Dec. 1640, 19 Mar 1641, 27 May, 22 July 1642, 29 Apr. 1643, 20 June, 27 July, 10 Dec. 1647, 8 Dec. 1655.

147. SR0, GD 188/19/9/6; GD 26/4/74. For Wood's dealings with Morton see GD 29/1274, 1261/4-10. See also below, p. 397 for the problems caused by Wood's borrowing from Covenanters.

clients throughout Scotland in need of extra income.<sup>148</sup>

Many of the Scottish nobility and minor aristocracy relied heavily upon the burgh elite to provide their monetary needs.

In 1613 Patrick Cochrane lent money in Glasgow, Ayrshire and Fife, probably reflecting his trading connections with these places rather than as a result of his being a renowned money-lender.<sup>149</sup>

James Inglis was owed money by the earl of Tullibardine in 1618, as well as being owed sums in Glasgow.<sup>150</sup>

Alexander Pierson was owed money by both the earl of Buccleuch and Lord Sanquhar in 1625.<sup>151</sup>

The earl of Morton was constantly in contact with members of the Edinburgh elite to provide him with extra capital during these years.<sup>152</sup>

Katherine Hope, wife of John Veitch, was owed money by the earl of Roxburgh in 1627, as well as sums in Dundee, Buckhaven and Kelso.<sup>153</sup> The testament of James Rae's wife in 1627 reveals them as being involved quite substantially in lending money to the nobility.<sup>154</sup> They were

---

148. The findings of MacNiven, *Merchant and Trader*, 230 reveal that Aberdeen merchants were an important source of local income. In Dumfries, however, farmers in need of extra capital turned to other farmers to supply this rather than to merchants (Coutts, *Social and Economic History of Dumfries 1600-1665*, 94, 143).

149. Edin. Tests, 29 Dec. 1613.

150. Edin. Tests, Sara Morison, 28 Feb. 1618.

151. Edin. Tests, 21 June 1625. Buccleuch also borrowed money from John Spence between 1622 and 1630. See SR0, GD 224/393/9/1-23. Sanquhar borrowed from Archibald Johnston in 1619 (Edin. Tests, 28 Apr. 1619).

152. Edin. Tests, Bathia Guthrie, 1 Sept. 1627. See also, SR0, GD 29/1257, 1259, 1261/4-10; GD 188/19/9/6; Edin. Tests, Agnes Byres, 4 Feb. 1632; Bessie Seton, 11 Feb. 1635; 14 July 1617.

153. Edin. Tests, Katherine Hope, 11 Dec. 1628. Roxburgh also borrowed from Richard Dobie, Edin. Tests, 17 Mar. 1613. See also Edin. Tests, Isabelle Davidson, 5 Nov. 1620; 21 Jan. 1617.

154. Edin. Tests, Margaret Edgar, 20 Apr. 1628.

owed sums by the earls of Bothwell, Roxburgh, and Dunfermline, as well as Lords Erskine and Balmerino. John Hamilton was owed various sums by at least eight lairds in 1630, as well as £68 by the commendator of Melrose and £376 by the commissary of Lanark.<sup>155</sup>

Sir Patrick Home of Ayton owed John Trotter the annual interest on 40,000 merks borrowed by him in August 1630.<sup>156</sup>

In 1631 James Halyburton had money on loan to Sir George Forrester of Corstorphine, Sir Lachlan McClean and Lord Fraser of Lovat.<sup>157</sup>

James Winram was owed the annual profits on £2,000 which was borrowed by the Earl Marischal in 1632.<sup>158</sup>

In 1635 Lord Sinclair of Berridale owed Thomas Bannatyne 5,250 merks by bond.<sup>159</sup>

In 1640 Mr. Bartilmo Somerville was owed 20,000 merks by the earl of Lothian,<sup>160</sup>

and two years later John Fleming was owed money by the earl of Galloway, as well as sums in Aberdeen, Kelso, Ayr, St. Andrews, Perth and Dumbarton.<sup>161</sup>

Not only were the Edinburgh elite involved in lending money within Scotland but they were also developing these sorts of connections in England and on the Continent. In 1622 James Inglis left a debt of some £1,031 Flemish, at ten merks Scots the pound, owed directly as borrowed money to his factor in Campvere.<sup>162</sup>

Henry Morison was owed 1,000 merke, plus ten

---

155. Edin. Tests, Katherine Brown, 4 Sept. 1632.

156. Edin. Tests, Janet McMath, 18 Mar. 1631.

157. Edin. Tests, Katherine Cullane, 11 Aug. 1632.

158. Edin. Tests, 11 Aug. 1632. See also Edin. Tests, Isabelle Davidson, 5 Nov. 1620 for the Earl Marischal's debts.

159. Edin. Tests, 28 Oct. 1635.

160. Edin. Tests, 10 Feb. 1642.

161. Edin. Tests, 15 June 1642.

162. Edin. Tests, 2 Jan 1623.



percent annual interest, by Sir James Hamilton in Bangor in Ireland in 1623.<sup>163</sup> William Dick loaned money in London in the 1620s, as well as in Paris in 1627.<sup>164</sup> By 1622 the Edinburgh elite were involved in lending substantial sums of money through their factors in Paris. William Dick, Peter Blackburn, Henry Morison, Robert Inglis and Patrick Wood were all lending money to Scottish travellers in Paris between 1622 and 1638, receiving interest payments on these bonds.<sup>165</sup> These transactions, involving transferable letters of credit, a reliable factor and an agreed rate of exchange surely prove the sophisticated methods which the wealthiest merchants in Scotland utilised both to maximise and safeguard their profits. Certainly few, if any, Scottish merchants prior to 1622 were involved in such financial transactions in foreign cities. These dealings do indicate that the development of transferable bills of exchange belongs to the second quarter rather than the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>166</sup>

The first forty years of the seventeenth century witnessed a notable interest on the part of Scotland's wealthiest entrepreneurs in putting their surplus capital to profitable use. Their ready money was, to some degree, channeled into money-lending at a rate never before witnessed. At no time

---

163. Edin. Tests, 19 Feb. 1624.

164. SRD, GD 30/1211/1; GD 109/1411/2; GD 45/17/100. For dealings in Paris and London see above pp 208-18.

165. SRD, GD 30/1187, 1189/1, 3, 4, 1190, 1191/1, 3, 5, 1207, 1209, 1210; GD 18/2379/2/3; 2368/2, 4.

166. Devine, 'The Scottish merchant community', 32; Devine, 'The merchant class of the larger Scottish towns', 106, makes no mention of money-lending abroad.

previously had the merchants of Edinburgh shown either a willingness or even the business skills required in order to develop a sophisticated pattern of money-lending. Indeed, it has been suggested that sixteenth-century Edinburgh merchants were only involved in money-lending upon their retiral from merchandising.<sup>167</sup> At least half of those considered to be Edinburgh's wealthiest, and most active, merchants in the early seventeenth century, were heavily involved in lending money in return for profits in cash. Not only were the interest rates charged, for the most part, reasonable - a return of at least eight to ten percent per annum could be expected on any money thus disposed of - but was well within the legally required limits set by act of Parliament during the period. However, if the amount charged as liquidate expense is considered the profits on money-lending were not insubstantial and of ever increasing importance in a merchant's income. By 1640 it was not unusual for at least thirty to forty percent of all debts owed to these merchants at the time of death to be owed directly as borrowed money, by bond of obligation and as the interest payments thereon rather than for merchandise. While it is not possible to calculate the sums collected annually on lent money by any one merchant, the profits made were substantial enough to cause the government to recognise such income as worthy of placing a special tax on. While Edinburgh's elite were not the only merchants of Scotland involved in money-lending during this period - merchants in Aberdeen were lending money although mostly in the locality -

---

167. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 187.

they certainly were to the fore in developing these transactions throughout Scotland and these dealings even crossed the North Sea to the Continent. They were regarded as the most natural outlet for the aristocracy and lairds in all parts of the country to turn to in order to borrow money. However, by the late 1630s because of these very developments a greater part of the wealth of the nation's wealthiest merchants was tied up in paper debts than ever before. The economic and political troubles of the 1640s, and the failure of many of Scotland's nobles and lairds to repay their debts created havoc amongst Edinburgh's mercantile elite. The resulting lack of capital severely curtailed their economic activities. Indeed, it would not be until at least the 1660s or 1670s that this form of business transaction would re-emerge in Scotland. Even then it was but a shadow of its former self.



## CHAPTER SIX

URBAN LANDHOLDING AND PROPERTY RENTING

Investment in, and development of, urban property was to play an increasingly important part in the economic life of the Edinburgh merchant elite during the first four decades of the seventeenth century. It reveals yet another facet of the changing, and broadening, basis of the mercantile lifestyle. The surplus capital produced by the increasing political and economic stability of the reign of James VI resulted in a greater readiness on the part of the wealthiest of the burgh inhabitants than heretofore to invest in real estate. Though a majority of the elite had some form of interest in the ownership, improvement and letting of Edinburgh property - as revealed through the Burgh Registers of Deeds, Acts and Decrees, the Great Seal and the Privy Seal, and, above all, the annuity tax of 1635 - it is difficult to determine whether or not the first forty years of the seventeenth century saw the development of what could be strictly called a rentier class, a group living solely from income engendered from rented property. Few, if any of the elite completely divested themselves of their mercantile interests. Nevertheless, it is possible to indicate that a trend towards involvement with urban property on the part of the elite did occur. Investment in building and improving property, sub-dividing tenements, and the letting of both rooms and booths was widespread, reflecting the somewhat similar experiences of Continental and English merchant elites of the same period.

Research into the origins and development of the change from an urban economy with its wealth based solely on merchandising to one involving a rentier class has been a somewhat neglected topic by historians of both Scotland and the Continent. Yet, that the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century witnessed a movement towards investment in property is borne out in several studies of Continental merchants. The urban elite of Leiden was speculating in and building up extensive real estate investments in the late years of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The wealthiest citizens of Nördlingen during the same period were also engaged in considerable urban property development for the first time.<sup>2</sup> These trends were probably mirrored in both Venice and Amsterdam,<sup>3</sup> although in these places on a much larger scale than in Edinburgh. It should, then, come as no surprise that the urban elite of Scotland were also experiencing these changes. A recent study of the Commissariat court of Dumfries, the only substantial work so far completed on early seventeenth-century Scottish urban and economic life, reveals that even in a community many times smaller than that of Edinburgh, the wealthiest merchants were involved in collecting rents from property.<sup>4</sup> One merchant received as much as £120 per annum

---

1. Lamet, *Men in Government*, 205-6.

2. Friedrichs, Urban Society in an Age of War, 52-4.

3. Burke, Venice and Amsterdam, 52-4.

4. See, Coutts, *Social and Economic History of Dumfries 1600-1665*.

from this investment.<sup>5</sup> The elite of Edinburgh also recognised property speculation as a profitable means of adding extra income to that engendered through the more traditional of their mercantile practices.

The sources themselves, nevertheless, create equally as many problems over the patterns of urban investment as they solve. Testaments, even where they do exist, are notoriously unreliable. Only debts outstanding owed either to or by the deceased at the time of death are recorded. If a merchant's tenants were reliable or if the death occurred shortly after rent payments were to be collected no such debts were listed. Even if a sum is stated as owing or owed for house, booth, or cellar rent, unless it is stipulated as for either Whitsun or Martinmas term, there is no way of knowing for what period the rent is owed, or even if that is the entire rent to be collected, as in some cases the entry is qualified as 'restand owand' of a greater sum. Many of the inventories of debts were not collated until well after death, allowing debts to be settled without being inscribed.<sup>6</sup> The Registers of Sasines are reliable only after 1617.<sup>6</sup> Sources such as the Burgh Registers of Deeds, Acts and Decrets and the Registers of the Privy Seal, by their very nature, reveal only changes in property holding or disputes between neighbours, or landlord and tenant, exaggerating the belief in unruly tenants and rapacious owners.

---

5. Ibid., 114.

6. For an explanation of the Sasine Registers see p. 308.



It is also difficult, using these sources, as well as the Great Seal, to locate any particular tenement accurately within the burgh. The usual rubric describing any property location is something in the order of "... the tenement lying next to the tenement of land of x on the north, y on the east, z on the west and the High Street on the south". Seventeenth-century Edinburgh society was, however, intimate enough that such descriptions were sufficient to them in order to delineate the property in question. Many of the registrations of change in ownership of property also do not state the amount paid for the property other than "... for a great sum now paid ...". In only one case is there a description of the physical dimensions of the property. If rent books had existed, they no longer survive as far as the elite were concerned. The closest approximation to a surviving rent book is the register of the annuity tax of 1635.<sup>7</sup> This was a list for that year of the tenements of the burgh stating the landlord of the property, the tenant, a brief description of the nature and extent of the premises rented, whether a 'laich' house, rooms, booths or stables, and the rent owed in order to assess the burgh's ability to pay the ministers' stipends. This is, however, only a list of property within the four quarters of Edinburgh and the south side of the Canongate from the Netherbow to

---

7. ECA, AT (1635). For a discussion of civic taxation, and the burdens it imposed, see Chapter eight.

St. John's Cross which was taxed with the four quarters, and does not include the substantial property holdings of the merchant elite in the Canongate proper, the Potterrow and St. Leonard's area, Broughton and above all Leith.<sup>8</sup> Any examination of the elite's involvement in property speculation is then somewhat limited. It is difficult, therefore, to come to any statistically satisfactory conclusions about the proportionate investment made by the elite in property as compared to their investments in merchant goods or other money making propositions, such as money lending. It is impossible to calculate accurately the annual income derived from property rental by any one merchant throughout these years. Yet, the evidence does reveal a lively interest in urban renting by the elite; it points to a revival in the building of tenements, rising rents and the tenuous beginnings of a class of people who could truly be described as rentiers.

The greater part of the Edinburgh merchant elite was involved in the holding of at least one piece of property in the burgh between 1600-38, although not all were involved in renting out the property. Using the annuity tax of 1635 it is possible to make certain conjectures about the scale of renting, and determine roughly how many of the elite were involved, what sorts of property they were renting and what income could be expected. Of the 310 wealthy members of the burgh between 1600 and 1637, 102 had died by 1635. Therefore,

---

8. However, the annuity tax is unique in that it is the only listing of a door-to-door record of Edinburgh before the Hearth Tax of 1691, and is a record unrepeated for any other Scottish burgh of the time.

they were not involved that year in the property market. The remaining figure of 208 merchants is somewhat artificially high. Some merchants may have been dead by this time and their testaments either unrecorded or lost. However, for the purposes of analysis this figure of 208 merchants will suffice. Of these 208 elite members 116, or fifty<sup>-five</sup> percent, were involved as landlords letting out property in 1635. A further sixteen members of the elite, or eight percent, held property but did not let out any portion of it; and sixty-six merchants, approximately thirty-two percent, are not mentioned in any form. Once again the figures are somewhat arbitrary. It is possible for a merchant to be registered as renting out houses, or booths, to tenants, while himself being registered as renting a house from another merchant. However, for 1635, it would seem that over half of the members of the elite were collecting some income from rented property in the burgh, in addition to whatever income they derived from their mercantile interests.

It is not easy to find a typical pattern regarding the numbers of property rented out, or amount of rent collected, by the elite in 1635. At one end of the scale the total may run from as little as £10 collected by John Bisset, for a yard in the Canongate;<sup>9</sup> Robert Carnegie's income of £65 per annum from two tenants in middle Baxter's Close;<sup>10</sup> the £16 6s. 8d. collected by the widow of William Paterson

---

9. ECA, AT (1635), p. 275.

10. Ibid., p. 92.



from her tenants in Beth's Wynd;<sup>11</sup> to a high, at the other end, of over £1,800 collected by Mr. Joseph Johnston from thirty-eight tenants in six different tenements throughout the burgh;<sup>12</sup> or the £2,035 12s. 4d. per annum collected by Mr. Nicol Udard.<sup>13</sup> Udard's investments included the west side of Niddry's Wynd; the whole of Lockhart's Court stretching towards Marlyn's Wynd in which he had nineteen tenants, as well as two houses dedicated as a hospital; a tenement on the east side of Niddry's Wynd; and a brawhouse on the south side of the Cowgate. These two men are somewhat unusual. Both were scions of wealthy merchant families and do not seem to have been involved in trade.<sup>14</sup> However, the majority of the merchants involved in property renting appear to have collected somewhere in the region of £300 per annum.<sup>15</sup>

The most usual income derived from rented property was in the £200-£300 per annum bracket, as there were more practicing merchants in this group. The column for up to £100 is somewhat artificial as it includes at least six widows or minor children of deceased merchants, who cannot really be considered as part of the elite. What is evident is that almost seventy percent of the merchant elite involved in renting out property were drawing the respectable income of up to £400 per annum. Nearly ten percent of the elite

---

11. Ibid., p. 511.

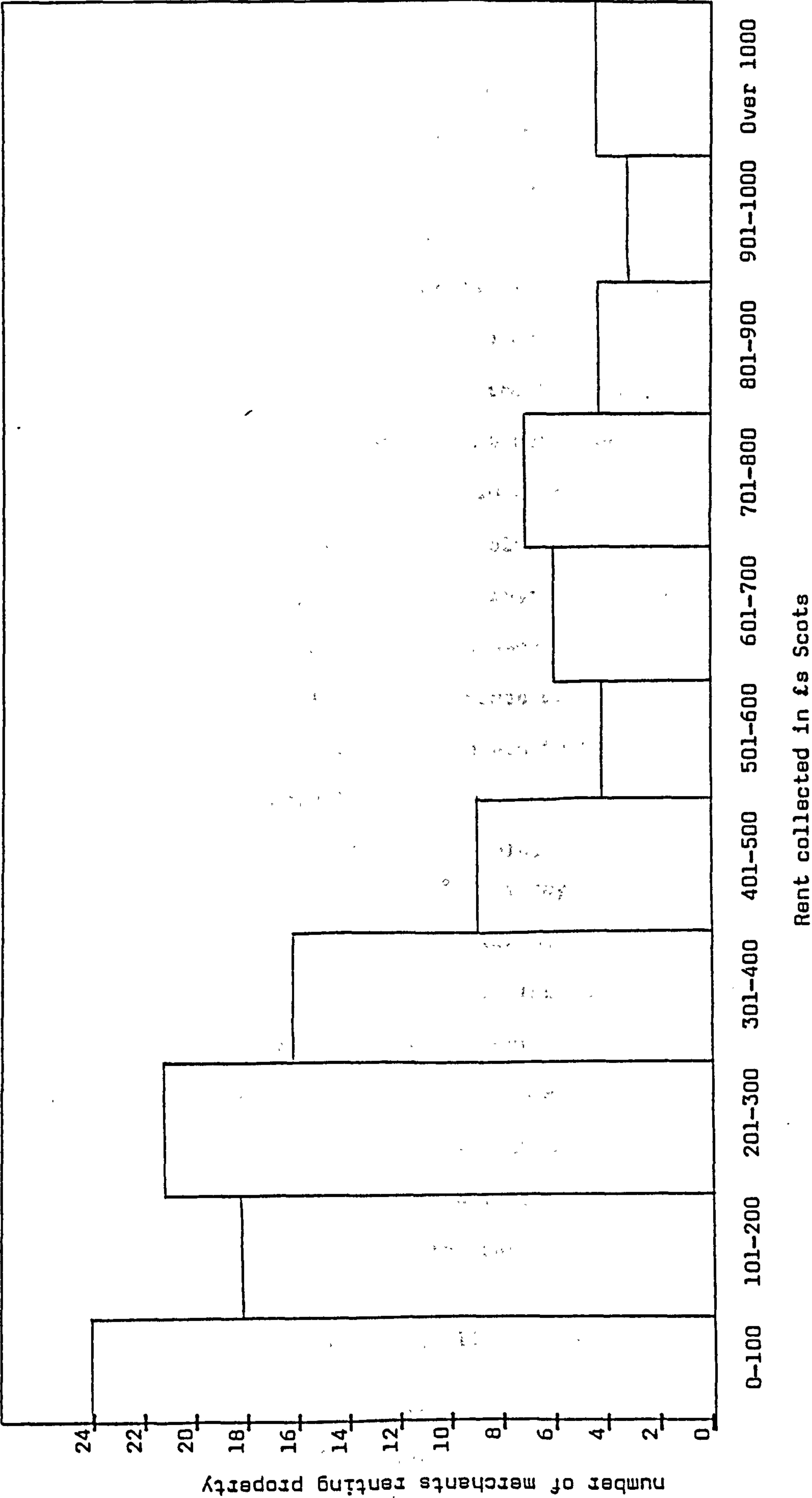
12. Ibid., pp. 131, 135, 136, 148, 150-1, 406-8.

13. Ibid., pp. 360-3, 372, 550.

14. Indeed, Johnston is described as 'of Hilton', and his testament reveals considerable investment in that estate. (Edin. Tests., 17 Oct. 1638).

15. See table 8.

TABLE 8. VALUE OF RENT COLLECTED BY ELITE 1635.



Source: ECA, AT (1635).

were able to gather in over £800 per annum. These merchants included William Dick, who collected £892 6s. 8d. from thirteen tenants in houses, booths and cellars throughout the city.<sup>16</sup> He himself paid the sum of £500 per annum for his house and yard in Kintore's Close.<sup>17</sup> David Mitchelson collected a total of £866 6s. 8d. a year from nine tenants in Byres' Close, and from his property on the north side of the High Street in the north-west quarter of the city.<sup>18</sup> George Foulis received an annual income of £1,331 from thirteen tenants in Peebles Wynd, Marlyn's Wynd, Kilkerran's Close, and from tenements on the south side of the High Street in the south-east, and south-west quarters.<sup>19</sup> These last three incomes would have been sufficient annual income in themselves to have lived a relatively comfortable life.

While no merchant was living solely from the income provided from his rented property, it may be assumed that a certain movement towards this was taking place. More merchants than ever were involved in the renting of property. A recent examination of sixteenth-century Edinburgh merchant's testaments makes mention of only three merchants involved in property letting.<sup>20</sup> The testament of the wealthiest merchant of the 1560s, William Birny, reveals only that he owed William Douglas house rent of £36 for the Martinmas term of 1567, and

---

16. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 93-4, 111-2, 119, 124, 449.

17. Ibid., p. 111.

18. Ibid., pp. 108-9, 109-10.

19. Ibid., pp. 321, 352, 514, 521.

20. Sanderson, 'Edinburgh merchants in society', 188-9.



for both terms of 1568.<sup>21</sup> It would, therefore, appear likely that this growth of interest in property letting was a development relatively new to the elite of the early seventeenth century.

Many of the elite renting out property in 1635 were, in fact, letting houses or booths to other members of the elite or to important persons in the burgh. George Suttie rented to John Adinston one of the two houses and cellars he owned for £160 per annum in the north-west quarter.<sup>22</sup> Yet, he rented, for himself, from the heirs of Mr. William Little, a 'laich' or under-booth on the north side of the Luckenbooths in the same quarter.<sup>23</sup> While Patrick Wood rented a house at the foot of John Sloan's close from William Mitchell for £333 6s. 8d,<sup>24</sup> at the same time he received £259 6s. 8d. annually from his tenants in Telfer's and north Gray's Close.<sup>25</sup> One of these tenants was George Foulis. Foulis himself collected £1,331 per annum from his property in the burgh. His tenants included Lord Balmerino, who rented a house on the High Street, next to Kilkerran's Close, for £300, and Gilbert Kirkwood, who occupied a house for which he paid Foulis £200 annually, in the same tenement.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, Kirkwood himself received £160 13s. 4d. a year by renting out a tenement on the High Street, in the north-east two quarter,

---

21. Edin. Tests., 9 Mar. 1568/9.

22. ECA, AT (1635), p. 116.

23. Ibid., p. 141. At the same time he rented out an under-booth in the same part of the Luckenbooths to Janet Moore for £30, p. 142.

24. Ibid., p. 80.

25. Ibid., pp. 120, 201-2.

26. Ibid., p. 514.

to four tenants.<sup>27</sup> James Rae held a house and cellar in Warriston's Close which he let out for £160, and also rented out a warehouse, and two booths, in the Luckenbooths.<sup>28</sup> However, Rae rented a house worth £160 from John Sinclair on the west side of Todrig's Wynd.<sup>29</sup> Sinclair also let a house in Blackfriars Wynd to Henry Nisbet for £100 per annum.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Moodie owned a tenement on the east side of Morocco Close from which he collected £293 6s. 8d. from four tenants. Yet, at the same time, Moodie rented a house for £133 6s. 8d. in Gourlay's Close from John Hilston.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps this complicated pattern of renting is an attempt by elite members to move into more desirable premises in the burgh, while still receiving income from their own tenements.

Many lairds and members of the minor nobility rented their town houses from members of the elite. Andrew Simpson received £26 13s. 4d. from Lord Durie for rent of a room,<sup>32</sup> William Salmond rented a house to Sir Robert Fairlie of Braid in Dewar's Close.<sup>33</sup> Lady Dunipace rented a house, yard and two cellars for £140 a year from John Inglis,<sup>34</sup> and Lady Cockburnspath paid £133 6s. 8d. to John Inglis for a house in Potter's Close.<sup>35</sup> Sir John Seton and the laird of Coldenknowes both rented houses from John Sinclair in Blackfriars Wynd,<sup>36</sup> and the laird of

---

27. Ibid., p. 180.

28. Ibid., pp. 122, 141.

29. Ibid., p. 424.

30. Ibid., p. 419.

31. Ibid., pp. 98-9, 537. Moodie is also listed as resident in his tenement on the east side of Morocco Close, holding there a house valued at £120, ibid., p. 99.

32. Ibid., p. 105.

33. Ibid., p. 25. Fairlie paid £73 6s. 8d. for this house.

34. Ibid., p. 524.

35. Ibid., p. 36.

36. Ibid., p. 419.

Herdmanston rented a house from him in Todrig's Wynd.<sup>37</sup>

A few of the elite's tenants were even more illustrious.

In 1635, John Smith rented a house in Fisher's Close to John Spottiswood, Archbishop of St. Andrews, for

£666 13s. 4d. a year;<sup>38</sup> William Gray rented a house to the Bishop of Glasgow in a tenement at the foot of Lady Stair's Close;<sup>39</sup> and the earl of Galloway paid £180

per annum for a house in Niddry's Wynd to Mr. Nicol Udard.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting tenant of a member of the elite was George Jameson, 'the Scottish Vandyke'. He rented a house on the High Street for £66 13s. 4d. per annum from Robert Mason.<sup>41</sup> Mason would not appear to have been a noted art collector, for upon his death in January 1638 he left behind personal possessions worth only £50.<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to determine the exact reasons why some of the elite were renting property from other people in 1635 rather than possessing houses themselves. Certainly, a few of those renting had acquired landed estates and would thus not require a permanent home in Edinburgh, particularly if the estate was not too far removed from the burgh. As

---

37. Ibid., p. 426.

38. Ibid., p. 543. Smith meanwhile himself rented a house on the opposite side of Fisher's Close for £233 6s. 8d. a year from George McMorran. In view of Smith's later political persuasions it is ironic that he should have rented property to the Archbishop. See below, pp. 393, 395-6.

39. Ibid., p. 86.

40. Ibid., p. 372.

41. Ibid., p. 222.

42. Edin. Tests., 31 Jan. 1639.



stated previously Henry Nisbet rented a house from John Sinclair in Blackfriars Wynd for £100 a year.<sup>43</sup> Nisbet was not himself recorded as being a landlord that year. However, Nisbet held a considerable amount of the land of Restalrig, to the north-east of the city, first granted to him in 1618.<sup>44</sup> He was also granted all the lands of Easter Granton to the north of the burgh in 1629;<sup>45</sup> and in the tax roll of 1637 he was described as 'Henry Nisbet in Restalrig'.<sup>46</sup> His main residence would probably have been on these lands, therefore, he would not have needed to own a town house. James Leslie rented a house from the widow of Sir James Murray in 1635, and was not himself listed as a landlord in the tax.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps the reason for this was that from 1624 he had been purchasing the lands of Pitliver, near Dunfermline, and he was even described as 'Leslie of Pitliver' in 1624.<sup>48</sup> Mr. John Cant was also not mentioned as a landlord in the annuity tax. He rented a house and four cellars for £240 a year in Kincaid's Close.<sup>49</sup> Cant had held the lands of Lauriston, to the west of the burgh, since 1622,<sup>50</sup> and held considerable property just south of the city in Sciennes, upon which he had built a tenement.<sup>51</sup> Three of the other members of the

---

43. ECA, AT (1635), p. 419.

44. RS 25/1, 10 Jan. 1618; RS 25/5, 1 Mar. 1622.

45. RS 25/15, 8 Sept. 1629.

46. ECA, Stent Rolls, 1637, NW3.

47. ECA, AT (1635), p. 289. Leslie also paid £160 for the second house within the same stairwell.

48. RMS, vii, 669; *ibid.*, viii, 184.

49. ECA, AT (1635), p. 500.

50. RMS, vii, 381.

51. RS 25/18, 21 Nov. 1631. See also chapter seven, n. 177.

elite who were recorded as only renting property from others without themselves being landlords, were, in fact, renting merchant booths or warehouses. John Rhind, Archibald Sydsenf and John Fullerton fall into this category.<sup>52</sup> However, it would appear to have been more usual for members of the elite to rent out property rather than rent from other Edinburgh inhabitants. It was not usual for any of the elite to have lived solely from rental income. Yet, the amount to be earned, averaging somewhere between £200 and £400 per annum must have been viewed as a favourable investment and as an important new factor in engendering income.

The boom in population experienced in Edinburgh in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century helped create the climate, and impetus, necessary for the development of large scale property speculation. The increase from approximately 15,000 inhabitants in the early 1580s to about 30,000 in the 1630s,<sup>53</sup> although some writers speak of a trebling of the population of the burgh between 1560 and 1660,<sup>54</sup> — placed severe pressure upon the available living space. The limited amount of land and buildings available for residential use within the four quarters required that new, and even more densely packed, tenements be built to provide the accommodation needed. It was, for the most part, the merchant elite who, having both the surplus capital, and

---

52. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 140, 141, 166.

53. For an examination of population see above, p. 10.

54. I. Whyte, Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth-Century Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1979), 231.

the rights of ownership to waste land, were involved in the clearing of ruinous tenements,<sup>55</sup> and in the erection, and renting out, of new tenement blocks.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the early years of the seventeenth century there is ample evidence of the elite's involvement in building construction. Investment in, and improvement of, property was regarded as a sound practice. In 1614, when Samuel Ellis purchased a dwelling house consisting of a hall, chamber and gallery on the north of the High Street in Back Close for £1000 from Sir Lewis Craig, he had actually occupied and substantially improved the property from 1604 as a tenant of Craig's.<sup>57</sup> In April 1600 a complaint was brought before the Dean of Guild against James McMath who was then raising and repairing a tenement on Blackfriars Wynd.<sup>58</sup> Thirty-five years later McMath was still in possession of this tenement, from which he collected annually £146 from five tenants.<sup>59</sup> John Ure had been infeft in a tenement at the head of the Westbow, on the south of the High Street, in 1606, which he repaired, and improved, before selling it, at what must have been a profit, to his son-in-law, Robert Salmond, in August

---

55. SRO, B22/8/26, 23 Feb. 1631 George Foulis of Ravelston was registered as building up a property burned by the English, probably in the 1540s, in Forrester's Wynd and selling it.

56. For a discussion of the process of repletion - or infilling - of tenement plots see R. Fox, 'Urban Development, 1100-1700', in G. Whittington and I.D. Whyte (eds.), An Historical Geography of Scotland, pp. 73-93.

57. SRO, B22/8/15, 16 July 1614.

58. ECA, DGCR, i, 18 April 1600.

59. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 414-5.



1629.<sup>60</sup> In 1615 John Porterfield sold a tenement, and certain merchant booths which he had built on a piece of waste land, to Robert Cairncross.<sup>61</sup> Thomas Gladstone repaired and developed his tenement on the High Street in June 1619.<sup>62</sup> He was obviously providing the space required for the tenant from whom he collected £150 in 1635.<sup>63</sup> Evidence of infilling is available in the sale in June of 1615 by Adam Rae of Pitsindie to John Home, for 4,500 merks, of the backlands of his tenement on the west side of Cant's Close. Rae had built a house, consisting of hall, laich chamber, kitchen, two rooms and stairs on this property.<sup>64</sup>

It seems, however, that the elite began to invest heavily in property repairing and construction, whether for sale or rent, from only about 1630, as references in all sources increase dramatically at this time. In March 1630 James Winram repaired a tenement at the head of Old Fishmarket Close although he had actually purchased it in 1612 for over £750.<sup>65</sup> Winram provided a new timber and slate roof, replaced wooden window frames with stone ones, and proceeded to rent the improved premises to his son-in-law.<sup>66</sup>

---

60. SRO, B22/8/26, 27 Aug. 1629.

61. SRO, B22/8/16, 10 Mar. 1615. This sale is the only one in which measurements are recorded. The tenement measured from south to north  $12\frac{3}{4}$  elns, or approximately, thirty feet.

62. ECA, DGCR, iii, 23 June 1619.

63. ECA, AT (1635), p. 84.

64. SRO, B22/8/16, 29 June 1615.

65. SRO, GD 6/876, 881.

66. SRO, GD 6/892.

John Bisset was granted permission to rebuild six or seven houses in the Canongate which had been destroyed by fire in 1631.<sup>67</sup> Although it is not stated, he must have received sufficient income from the renting of these properties to have made the expenditure of considerable sums on rebuilding worth his while.

Although the McMorran family had inherited considerable property on the south side of the Lawnmarket in 1601, it was not until 1630 that the family fully developed and let out the property.<sup>68</sup> Early in 1635 George Wauchope totally demolished, and then rebuilt his tenement at the head of Conn's Close.<sup>69</sup> According to the annuity tax he received an annual income of £373 6s. 8d. from the three tenants of this property.<sup>70</sup> In May 1636 David Mitchell substantially demolished and repaired a tenement on the south side of the High Street.<sup>71</sup> In October of the same year Robert Halyburton sold a tenement or great lodging containing a dwelling house and three booths which had been built by his father on property stretching from the High Street to the North Loch.<sup>72</sup> In the annuity tax of the preceding year Halyburton received £492 13s. 4d.

---

67. RPC, iv, 14 Jul. 1631.

68. SRO, B22/8/26, 6 Feb. 1630.

69. ECA, DGCR, iv, 20 May 1635.

70. ECA, AT (1635), p. 463.

71. SRO, B22/8/29, 16 May 1636.

72. Ibid., 6 Oct. 1636.

annually from the tenants of his property in Craig's Close, which ran north from the High Street.<sup>73</sup> The waste, back-lands of the properties running along the High Street must have been substantially developed during the 1630s. Halyburton was not alone in building on this empty land. In 1638, John Fleming also repaired, and built up, a 'great tenement' upon vacant land leading to the North Loch, which he eventually rented out.<sup>74</sup> It was, perhaps, the economic stability and boom of the early years of the century, as well as the increase in population, which encouraged the diversification of income into these property investments in the 1630s.

It is evident from the customs books that the merchant elite were involved in the importing of building materials, although the evidence itself is somewhat patchy. That these imported materials were actually used for house building within the burgh remains obscure. Certainly, William Little, one of the more prosperous tenement owners, whose heirs, in 1635, owned and rented out all of an unnamed close next to Buchanan's Court in addition to six merchant booths<sup>75</sup> imported, perhaps for the construction of these dwellings, no less than thirty-four tons of timber from Whitby between March and September 1622.<sup>76</sup> William Gray, who owned a tenement at the foot of Lady Stair's Close, and was actively involved in the construction of Lady Stair's House,<sup>77</sup> imported

---

73. ECA, AT (1635), p. 154.

74. SRO, B22/8/30, 11 June 1638. There is no mention of this property in the annuity tax of 1635.

75. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 141, 142, 539.

76. SRO, E71/29/7, 10 March, 18 July, 13 Sept. 1622.

77. ECA, AT (1635), p. 86.



1,800 roof spars, as well as wainscotting, knappalds, or oak staves, and other forms of timber, from Norway between June 1622 and June 1623.<sup>78</sup> John Fullerton imported Swedish boards to Leith in May 1623, John Murray brought in 200 roof spars, as well as wood from Sweden in July of that year, and William Muirhead imported wainscotting from there in September 1623.<sup>79</sup> Between January 1614 and November 1616 five members of the elite, Patrick Ellis, James Somerville, David Jenkin, Nicol Udard and James Winram, each substantial property owners, were recorded as having paid dues for the weighing of chimneys in the Edinburgh weigh house.<sup>80</sup> In May and October 1639 David Jenkin again imported building materials. He pledged surety for a shipment of roof spars and planks arriving in Leith in those months from Norway and Helmstadt.<sup>81</sup> Twice in July 1639 John Ronald stood surety for cargoes of planks, pipes, wainscot, Knappalds, staves and wood brought in from Danzig.<sup>82</sup> While the above mentioned merchants, all property holders in the burgh or in Leith, were importing the raw materials required for building and were themselves involved in property improvement, it is impossible to prove that the goods mentioned were used on their own properties. They may

---

78. SRO, E71/29/7, 11 June, 25 July 1622; SRO, E71/29/8, 26 May, 15 June 1623.

79. SRO, E71/29/8, 24 May, 11 July, 18 Sept. 1623.

80. ECA, Acct. of Goods in Edinburgh Weighhouse (1613-17), 24 Jan., 28 June, 25 Sept. 1614; 26 Nov., 5 Dec., 1616.

81. ECA, Merk of the Tun, 13 May, 7 Oct. 1639; ECA, Compt Book of Edward Little, 1638-39, 13 May, 5 Oct. 1639.

82. ECA, Merk of the Tun, 9, 18 July 1639; ECA, Compt. Book of Edward Little, 1638-39, 5, 18 July 1639.

have been re-exported to other Scottish burghs or have been intended for the many building projects entered into by the city such as the new parliament building and Tron church.<sup>83</sup> However, it is probably significant that only two merchants not members of the elite were involved in importing of timber to Leith between 1622-3. The elite completely dominated what there was of the timber trade in 1638-9.

It was not unusual for the merchant elite to be involved in the development and renting out of property in the suburbs of Edinburgh - the Potterrow, Restalrig or Leith, or in other burghs. The investment in property in other burghs of the realm was, however, limited and was usually confined to property along the Forth estuary, or within easy travelling distance of Edinburgh.<sup>84</sup> John Porterfield owned a house and several crofts in Culross from 1600.<sup>85</sup> Joseph Marjoribanks held several houses in Prestonpans from 1605.<sup>86</sup> Mr. Nicol Brown owned several tenements and booths in Lanark in 1613 when he was forced to sue his tenants for non-payment of rent.<sup>87</sup> In 1606 John Dalmahoy, a resident in Newbattle, was sued for non-payment of rent by James Richardson. Dalmahoy owed his absentee Edinburgh landlord thirty-five marks for a house,

---

83. For a discussion of the town's building projects in the 1620s and 1630s see below p. 383.

84. One notable exception being Alexander Vaus, who had a house in the Kirkgate of Inverness in April 1604. See SRO, GD/23/3/4.

85. RMS, vi, 1280.

86. RPC, viii, 340-41; RS/24/7, 26 Aug. 1606.

87. SRO, C57/284, 23 Nov. 1613.

yard and two acres of land in Newbottle.<sup>88</sup> Andrew

Purves also held a mansion and garden in Newbottle

by 1622.<sup>89</sup> As all of the aforementioned merchants

also owned a house or tenement in Edinburgh, it is

doubtful that they were resident in these burghs.

What is likely is that these houses were used when the

merchant was on the road due to business, and were let

to local inhabitants for the better part of the year.

Investment in property just outside the four quarters of the burgh was more prevalent. While most Edinburgh merchants had storage space for their goods in their Edinburgh tenements, a majority of the elite also had cellars, vaults, or lofts in Leith. Indeed, Leith was regarded as prime development space, and although legally not part of Edinburgh until 1636 it was, for the elite's property owning purposes, amalgamated into the burgh.

James Baron held a tenement in Leith in 1603.<sup>90</sup> Patrick

Cochrane purchased a tenement there worth 2,200 marks in

1606.<sup>91</sup> John Porterfield was owed rent by his tenants

in Leith in 1609,<sup>92</sup> while Andrew Ainslie was infeft in

three tenements there in March 1622, and in another house

in Leith three years later.<sup>93</sup> Thomas Watson repaired his

88. SR0, 822/8/9, 19 Oct. 1606.

89. RS, 25/6, 10 Aug. 1622; RS 25/8, 29 Nov. 1623; RMS, viii, 1634. This house was resigned by Purves in 1638. ibid, ix, 835.

90. RMS, vi, 1388.

91. RS 24/7, 1 Dec. 1606.

92. Edin. Tests., 31 Aug. 1609. He was owed £20.

93. RS 25/5, 12 Mar. 1622; RS 25/11, 25 Oct. 1626.



tenement in Leith in 1626.<sup>94</sup> In 1622 James Loch purchased a waste land in Burge's Close in Leith and erected a tenement with the obvious intention of collecting rental income.<sup>95</sup> Twelve years later, upon the death of his wife, he was owed rent by two tenants in Leith.<sup>96</sup> Alexander Brown repaired his tenement at the foot of the Fleshmarket in Leith in 1629.<sup>97</sup> James Halyburton was owed two year's rent from his houses in Leith at the time of his wife's death in 1631.<sup>98</sup> In 1637 Robert Carnegie was owed rent in both Leith and Edinburgh.<sup>99</sup> Development of property in the Potterrow and Bristo port areas to the south of the burgh by members of the elite was also common. Mr. John Cant owned several tenements in both these areas from 1625, and James Rae held both a tenement in the Bristo port area in 1625, and one in Potterrow in 1629.<sup>100</sup> The pressure caused by the gradual infilling of waste land within the walls of Edinburgh in the first four decades of the seventeenth century must have forced the elite to look to these places for their investments.

In some cases it is possible to examine the effect that the combination of population increase, new property develop-

---

94. ECA, MSS. ETCR, xiii, 21 April 1626.

95. ECA, DGCR, iii, 9 Apr. 1622.

96. Edin. Tests., Margaret Barclay, 5 Dec. 1634.

97. ECA, DGCR, iv, 30 May 1629.

98. Edin. Tests., Katherine Cullane, 11 Aug. 1632.

99. Edin. Tests., 5 Jan. 1637.

100. RS 25/10, 22 Apr., 26 Sep. 1625; RS 25/11, 5 Jan. 1626; RS 25/14, 22 Jan. 1629.

ment and the general increase in the elite's investment in rentable property had within the burgh. It may be suspected that with these pressures there would have been both a rapid change-over in tenants and a substantial increase in rents demanded for property. The evidence does tend to support the idea of rising rents. However, it also suggests a certain amount of stability in the occupancy of property. Given the limited evidence available from the sources, it may be surmised that while the first forty years of the century saw a slight increase in rents charged for urban property, particularly those demanded for merchant booths, it was not sufficient to cause a rapid turnover of tenants. Indeed, it would appear to be the norm to have been a long-staying tenant.

Perhaps the easiest of the elite families to examine in this context is that of Mr. William Little. The investment of the Little family in urban property was substantial. The reward for this was the collection of over £1,000 a year from rent of various properties throughout the city.<sup>101</sup> Using the figures for 1635, and the testaments of Little of 1631, as well as that of his spouse, Isobel Speir, registered in 1627, it is possible to compare the amounts collected from rented property.<sup>102</sup> According to the annuity tax Alexander Speir, Little's father-in-law, collected, on behalf of Little's heirs, rents worth £270

---

101. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 141, 142, 539.

102. Edin. Tests., Isobel Speir, 26 June 1627; 26 May 1631. Hereafter I.S. and W.L.

from five tenants of merchant booths on the north side of the Luckenbooths, in addition to a total of £960 from twelve tenants, all in a little close next to Buchanan's Court adjacent to Brodie's Close on the south side of the High Street.<sup>103</sup> Of these seventeen tenants eleven are mentioned as owing rent to the Little family some time between 1627 and 1635.

By comparing these rental payments it would appear that while rent charged for dwelling space remained constant that charged for commercial property increased slightly during these eight years. Marion Wallace paid £12 annually for a booth in 1626.<sup>104</sup> This rent remained the same according to Little's testament in 1631.<sup>105</sup> However, she is listed in 1635 as owing £20 a year rent for an under-booth on the north side of the Luckenbooths, an increase of some forty percent in four years.<sup>106</sup> Other increases were less substantial. George Suttie, himself a member of the elite, paid £46 rent of a booth in 1626,<sup>107</sup> and in 1635 he paid £46 13s. 4d. for the same property.<sup>108</sup> Jean Halyburton owed £24 rent for a booth for the Martinmas term of 1626,<sup>109</sup> £48 for Martinmas term 1629 and Whitsun term of 1630,<sup>110</sup> and £53 6s. 8d. in 1635,<sup>111</sup> an increase of

---

103. ECA, AT (1635), p. 539.

104. I.S.

105. W.L.

106. ECA, AT (1635), p. 142.

107. I.S.

108. ECA, AT (1635), p. 142.

109. I.S.

110. W.L.

111. ECA, AT (1635), p. 142.



some ten percent. Similarly, there was a ten percent increase in the booth rent due from James Stewart between 1630 and 1635.<sup>112</sup> There is only one mention of a drop in rent charged for commercial property, that being for a booth worth £33 6s. 8d. in 1630,<sup>113</sup> and worth only £30 a year in 1635.<sup>114</sup>

Rent for domestic dwellings seem to have been more stable. Between 1625 and 1630 John Mason's widow paid the Little family a rent of £2 a year for a dwelling at the foot of Liberton's Wynd.<sup>115</sup> William Clerk paid £20 a year house rent between 1627 and 1630.<sup>116</sup> George Baillie owed the Little's £66 13s. 4d. as rent for the Martinmas term house rent of 1626,<sup>117</sup> and paid a similar rent for two cellars and a house in 1635.<sup>118</sup> In only one case is there evidence of a substantial increase made by the Little's in their domestic rents. John Archibald paid rent of four merks per annum for his house through the years 1621-6;<sup>119</sup> but by Whitsun of 1630 he paid eight merks a year.<sup>120</sup>

That property was consistently occupied by the same people is apparent in other tenants of the Little family. Harry Osborn rented a chamber for at least five consecutive years<sup>121</sup> and John Blair rented a house between 1626 and

---

112. W.L. Stewart owed rent for his booth Whitsun, 1630, worth £36, and in 1635 owed £80 per annum. (ECA, AT (1635), p. 142).

113. W.L. John Short owed him £16 13s. 4d. for Whitsun term 1630.

114. ECA, AT (1635), p. 142. Bessie Short owed £30 for an under-booth.

115. I.S. & W.L. There is no mention in the annuity tax.

116. I.S. & W.L.

117. I.S.

118. ECA, AT (1635), p. 539.

119. I.S.

120. W.L.

121. I.S. & W.L.

1635.<sup>122</sup> Certainly this long term occupation of property is revealed in other merchants' testaments. The printer, Andrew Hart, owed James Aikman £60 for a booth on the north side of the High Street in September of 1633.<sup>123</sup> His widow still occupied the booth in 1635, and paid Aikman £80 a year - a slight increase.<sup>124</sup> David Mitchell rented a booth on the west side of Craig's Close from Alexander Dennistoun for £18 a year in 1635,<sup>125</sup> for which his wife paid £36 a year in 1644, a fifty percent increase.<sup>126</sup> Archibald Thompson, William Shaw and Thomas Byrne are all listed as tenants of John Roxburgh in 1635,<sup>127</sup> and upon his death in 1640.<sup>128</sup> John Bisset rented a house and cellar on the west side of Lord Durie's Close for £33 6s. 8d. from Mr. John Rig in 1635<sup>129</sup> and owed Rig 130 merks rent for the property upon his death three years later.<sup>130</sup> Jean Watson rented a house and cellar on middle Baxter's Close from Robert Carnegie for at least two years.<sup>131</sup> James Loch rented property on Purves' Close and St. Mary's Wynd to four separate individuals in 1633,<sup>132</sup> who are all listed as tenants in the annuity tax of 1635.<sup>133</sup> It would appear that the building boom of the early seventeenth century may have reinforced, rather than upset, the traditional patterns of settlement within the burgh. It left urban tenants

---

122. I.S. and ECA, AT (1635), p. 539.

123. Edin. Tests., 12 Sep. 1622.

124. ECA, AT (1635), p. 157.

125. Ibid., p. 153.

126. Edin. Tests., Janet Gray, 14 May 1644.

127. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 117, 118.

128. Edin. Tests., 23 Nov. 1640.

129. ECA, AT (1635), p. 470.

130. Edin. Tests., 19 Oct. 1638.

131. ECA, AT (1635), p. 92, Edin. Tests., Barbara Mure, 5 Jan. 1637.

132. Edin. Tests., Margaret Barclay, 5 Dec. 1634.

133. ECA, AT (1635), pp. 240-1, 449, 635.

as secure in their rights to their rented accommodation as those people who have been termed the 'kindly tenants' of contemporary rural Scotland.<sup>134</sup>

The burgh elite were not, however, spared the usual problems caused by renting out property - troublesome tenants. It would appear to have been the normal practice that upon the purchase of any tenement of land, house or booth the new owner was required to accept the sitting tenant. In order to aid this transfer the majority of the documents which describe the premises being sold normally relate the name or names of the occupiers of the premises. In August of 1614 Robert Erskine sold portions of his tenement on the High Street to James Forsyth. The property purchased consisted of two under-cellars occupied by one William Pandstoun, and a little dwelling house which had once been occupied by Thomas Davidson, and in 1614 by an unnamed tenant.<sup>135</sup> In 1615 David Williamson sold to Mr. Nicol Brown a dwelling house in Marlyn's Wynd consisting of a hall, chamber, kitchen and gallery tenanted by Andrew Lawson.<sup>136</sup> In 1630 David Murray purchased a tenement on the High Street, for 6,500 merks, containing a merchant booth and two chambers or vaults occupied by Isabel Young.<sup>137</sup> That same year John Smith also bought a house, built on Greyfriar's land, and occupied by three tenants.<sup>138</sup> In February 1631 John Sinclair purchased a tenement in Blackfriars Wynd, which contained three lodgings, occupied by Lord Blantyre, Mr. Thomas

---

134. See M.H.B. Sanderson, Scottish Rural Society in the Sixteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1982), 56-63, for a discussion of rural kindly tenure.

135. SRQ, B22/8/15, 27 Aug. 1614.

136. SRQ, B22/8/16, 14 Jan. 1615.

137. SRQ, B22/8/26, 24 Feb. 1630.

138. Ibid., 7 Feb. 1631.



Murray and an unspecified tenant.<sup>139</sup> In 1636 Andrew Oswald purchased a tenement in the same wynd, and was forced to accept Andrew Napier, an embroiderer, and Patrick Lochmalony as his tenants.<sup>140</sup> When Archibald Sydsenf purchased a tenement on the north of the Cowgate, on Cant's Close, in 1639, it was clearly stated that the two dwelling houses were occupied by Mr. James Gordon.<sup>141</sup>

This is not to imply that the relations with tenants upon the transfer of property were always amicable. Often new purchasers were legally bound to accept tenants whether they wanted them or not. In 1615 Hugh Brown sold a tenement on the north side of the High Street, in Telfer's Close, to Samuel Somerville. The tenement consisted of various dwelling houses occupied by Adam Cunningham advocate, Alexander Paterson and John Ellis, together with an under-cellar occupied by Margaret White. The contract of sale stated that Paterson, Ellis and White were to legally accept that rent was now to be paid to Somerville, or Brown was to be obliged to remove them from the tenement before the sale was finalised. However, Adam Cunningham had occupied his portion of the tenement, consisting of a hall, a kitchen, three chambers, together with a loft and three cellars, since 1606, and was in no way to be removed. Indeed, in 1613 Cunningham had paid to Brown £1000 in order to secure his right to the lodging until Whitsun of 1616 when it was to be renewed for a similar period at the same price. Somerville was

---

139. Ibid., 19 Feb. 1631.

140. SRO, B22/8/30, 21 Feb. 1638.

141. Ibid., 19 March 1639.

to be bound to this agreement as well according to the terms of the contract of sale.<sup>142</sup> This contract also supports the idea of a form of security and right of tenure by tenants discussed earlier. However, a few of the contracts of sale of tenements did require that the sitting tenants be removed. In July of 1603 Alexander Scott in Dean raised an action against Thomas Acheson, master of the mint, and George Heriot, younger, goldsmith, both tenants of a land and back house in Gray's close, requiring them '... to flit and remove thair selffis thair wyffs, bairns, servands and tennents furth and fra the forsaidis lands....'<sup>143</sup> This, despite the fact that Acheson had built a mint in the yard of the tenement. Similarly when John Porterfield sold a tenement in Culross to Archibald Primrose in 1612 he was obliged to remove the tenants, which he had not done by October of 1612.<sup>144</sup>

Several disputes with tenants by the elite over non-payment of rent, and attempts to evict tenants for this, figure in the records. In July of 1613 Robert Dougal brought an action of eviction against Gilbert Harvie and his tenants in Soune's Close for rent totalling over £400 owed since 1602.<sup>145</sup> In November of the same year Mr. Nicol Brown brought an action to forcibly remove eleven tenants of both houses and booths in Lanark for non-payment of rent.<sup>146</sup> In 1629 Alexander Reid owed £67 10s. rent for two terms' rental of a house in Gray's Close to both James Dalglish and James Nicol, who

---

142. SRO, B22/8/16, 8 Apr. 1615.

143. NLS, Charters, 5966, 30 July 1602.

144. SRO, C57/278, 17 or 19 Feb. 1613.

145. SRO, C57/279, 29 July 1613.

146. Ibid., 23 Nov. 1613.

brought an action against him.<sup>147</sup> William Rig successfully prosecuted the Archbishop of St. Andrews for £80 owed to him for rental of a chamber in 1612 and 1613.<sup>148</sup> Certainly the elite were not always the injured party in any troubles caused by renting of property but could themselves be prosecuted for non-payment. James Reid, a cooper in Leith, sued Ronald Murray for £15 owed to Reid for a close occupied by Murray in 1614.<sup>149</sup> John Morison had an action brought against him in 1636. He had rented a cellar in Leith from 20 June 1635, and owed a total of forty-seven weeks' rent.<sup>150</sup> It would, however, appear that for the most part the relationship between landlord and tenant was a fairly amicable one, with the evidence of tenants being ejected far outweighed by the evidence of smooth transfer of properties.

The early years of the seventeenth century were important to the Edinburgh merchant elite as a time of growing development and investment in urban property. The elite were beginning to invest in urban property as a means of engendering income on a scale unknown to merchants twenty or thirty years previously. The boom in the building of tenements and booths during the early years of the seventeenth century was largely financed and carried out by those considered to be the traditional merchant entrepreneurs of burgh society. While no merchants divested themselves entirely of their mercantile interests and lived solely from rental income, it was the usual practice for this group to add at least £200-£300 a year

---

147. SRO, B22/8/26, 10 Dec. 1629.

148. SRO, CS7/282, 25 June 1613; CS7/284, 30 July 1613.

149. ECA, DGCR, iii, 22 Feb. 1615.

150. Ibid., iv, 18 May 1636.



from this source to their merchandising profits. Moreover, through these investments in urban property, both within the burgh and its environs; whether Leith, the Potterrow or West Port areas; these merchants created a subtle change in the urban life style. A group of tenants emerged into burgh society confident in their rights of possession to rented premises - either domestic dwelling or commercial booths. It could be argued that here developed a form of urban 'kindly' tenant. Certainly there was created in these years a stability, in tenure of property as well as in the prices charged. Rented accommodation prices rose at a small and steady rate, unaffected by the population boom and resulting demand for living and business premises. It has been argued in an analysis of Venice and Amsterdam that mere ownership of land does not result in a rentier class; what is important is the attitude of those investing in the property.<sup>151</sup> What creates a rentier class is the improvement of the property and resultant reliance upon rented income as an ever more important addition to a merchant's income. The elite of early seventeenth century Edinburgh certainly seem to have been following along this pattern. They viewed income from rented premises as an increasingly secure form of investment, and by the late 1630s derived a larger proportion of their income from urban property than had their forefathers.

---

151. Burke, Venice and Amsterdam, 52-4, 60.